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The Church and the Christian Soul

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The Church and the Christian Soul

BY

ALICE LADY LOVAT

With a Preface by

H. E. CARDINAL GASQUET

Per ipsum, et cum ipso, et in ipso, est tibi Deo Patri omnipotente, in unitate Spiritus Sancti, omnis honor et gloria. —(Canon Missæ).

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PREFACE

THIS volume is calculated to do much good to the souls of those who will use it. "The Church and the Christian Soul" is intended to strengthen and fortify the spiritual life of the ordinary Christian through the sacred Liturgy of the Church, and mainly through an intelligent understanding and use of the prayers and lessons said by the priest at the altar on the Sundays and chief Feasts of the Christian Year. To assist the piety of those who will make use of the book, there are here gathered together many passages from approved authors and many pious reflections which illustrate the meaning of the prayers and passages from Holy Scripture, chosen by the Church to be used in the sacred Liturgy; and many interesting and useful explanations are given in its pages as to the history and origin of the offices which are celebrated in the course of the year.

A perusal of its pages will show at once that in many ways the work differs greatly from those on the same subject which we already possess. Such learned treatises upon the sacred Liturgy as, for example, that of Abbot Cabrol, or the *Liber Sacramentorum* of Abbot Schüster (the fifth volume of which has just appeared); or the well-known Liturgical Year of Dom Guéranger, are most important and of great interest to students. But the two former are somewhat too learned, perhaps, for the ordinary reader, whilst the last, in its fourteen volumes, is too long to be used, or even possessed by ordinary people. Whilst the present volume, as its title, "The Church and the Christian Soul," shows, is intended mainly as an aid to the soul in its spiritual life, through the consistent use of the Church's divine Liturgy. Its scope is to uplift the minds of those who follow the cycle of the feasts of the Church, in which is set forth the great and ever-living drama of the world's Redemption.

Every assistance which is given to get people to interest themselves in the Holy Mass, and to follow the meaning of the prayers and ceremonies of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, daily celebrated upon the Christian

altars, is to be cordially welcomed. Unfortunately, in these busy days of our materialistic age, it is to be feared that many of us merely attend, even on Sundays, at the Holy Sacrifice in order to satisfy the obligation of being present imposed by the Church, and instead of taking any real part in this great common Act of Worship, occupy the time in private prayers and special devotions. These are all excellent, no doubt, in themselves; but they are not the prayers of the sacred Liturgy itself, and what prayers can be compared with those chosen by the Church for the great Christian Sacrifice, and which for the most part have come down to us from remote antiquity.

Is it not true that many forget that, though the priest at the altar is the minister of the Holy Sacrifice, the people who assist at It, have, or ought to have, a real part in It, and offer It with him and through him? For this reason alone, it can never be right for those who assist at the Mass to be content with a mere corporal presence, and to abstain from taking an active part in It. Indeed portions of the Holy Mass are really meaningless if the priest be left without the active participation of those that assist at the Sacrifice. For example, when offering the chalice, the priest says: "*We* offer unto thee, O Lord, the chalice of salvation," etc.; then after the *Lavabo*, bowing before the altar, the priest prays: "Receive, O Holy Trinity, this oblation, which *we* make to thee," etc. This is followed by the *Orate Fratres*, in which he says: "Brethren, pray that my sacrifice and *yours* may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty." Then, to take one more example from the many which could be cited from the prayers of the Mass, in the *Canon*, at the commemoration of the living, the celebrant makes use of these words: "Be mindful . . . of all here present . . . for whom we offer, or *who offer*, up to thee this sacrifice of praise," etc.

Moreover, the prayers of the Holy Mass are all intended to lead up to the Holy Communion, and no better preparation can be imagined for the Communion of the faithful than following what is said by the priest. Ordinarily of course, and without some special reason, the Communion of the people is made after the priest

in the Mass—not before or after the Sacrifice. Just as the Last Supper was the heavenly banquet of our Lord and His disciples, so the Communion of the faithful is made with the priest.

From the beginning to the end of the Mass as we have it in our Missals there may be found, if we will enter into the spirit of the sacred Liturgy, all the necessary acts of faith, humility, charity, etc., which, having been composed by the Church, contain all that is best as a preparation for and thanksgiving after Communion. In the psalm *Judica* and the *Confiteor* with which the rite begins, we can express our profound humility and sincere compunction. In the Introit, the Collect and in the Epistle and Gospel we have everything to excite a lively faith, and from the Offertory to the Communion the Mass prayers furnish a succession of acts of oblation of ourselves and of love for Him who is offering Himself on the altar for our sakes and sins. After the Communion we find in the Mass prayers the best form of thanksgiving, whilst in the whole rite we have asked from God the special fruit to be gathered from the feast the Church is keeping.

Those who will use the Missal as their prayer-book when assisting at the Mass will find that the Holy Sacrifice quickly becomes the centre of their spiritual life. Assistance at the Mass, especially if we follow the words and the action of the Sacrifice, will open out a rich font of grace to the faithful soul. The classical passage of Cardinal Newman in "Loss and Gain" about the Mass is worth quoting, as it can hardly fail to make us appreciate the privilege of assisting at it. He writes: "Nothing is so consoling, so piercing, so thrilling, so overcoming as the Mass, said as it is amongst us. It is not a mere form of words—it is a great action, the greatest action that can be upon the earth. It is not the invocation merely, but, if I dare use the word, the evocation of the Eternal. He becomes present on the altar in flesh and blood, before whom Angels bow and devils tremble. This is that awful event which is the scope and is the interpretation of every part of the solemnity. Words are necessary, but as means, not as ends; they are the instruments of what is far higher, of consecration, of sacrifice. They hurry on as if

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impatient to fulfil their mission. Quickly they go, the whole is quick, for they are all parts of one integral action. Quickly they go, for they are awful words of Sacrifice. Quickly they pass, for the Lord Jesus goes with them, as he passed along the lake in the days of his flesh, quickly calling first one and then another. Quickly they pass; for they are as the words of Moses, when the Lord came down in the cloud, calling on the Name of the Lord as he passed by, 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth.' And, as Moses on the mountain, so we too, 'make haste and bow our heads to the earth and adore.' So we, all around, each in his place, look out for the great Advent, 'waiting for the moving of the waters.' Each in his place, with his own heart, with his own wants, with his own thoughts, with his own intention, with his own prayers, separate but concordant, watching what is going on, watching its progress, uniting in its consummation;—not painfully and hopelessly following a hard form of prayer from beginning to end, but, like a concert of musical instruments, each different, but concurring in a sweet harmony, we take our part with God's priest, supporting him, yet guided by him. There are little children there, and old men, and simple labourers, and students in seminaries, priests preparing for Mass, priests making their thanksgiving; there are innocent maidens, and there are penitent sinners, but out of these many minds rises one Eucharistic hymn, and the great Action is the measure and the scope of it."

These burning words show us what the Holy Mass may be and should be for us, if we will only try and understand the true significance of the great Christian Sacrifice. This volume on "The Church and the Christian Soul" will help us to understand better the meaning of the Sunday Offices, and the special spiritual help that is afforded to our souls by the lessons derived from the chief Feasts. Those who will study its pages cannot fail to derive great assistance in the work of uniting their souls to God, which is the end of all religion.

A. Card. Gasquet.

Rome, Christmas Day, 1922.

FOREWORD

THIS little book is the outcome of an appeal which I received from various quarters—one reaching me from an unknown German correspondent—after the publication of the "Catholic Church from Within," to bring out the chapter on the Liturgical Year separately in a book form. I had never quite dismissed this idea from my mind when it was superseded by another: which was to link the changes in the Ecclesiastical Year with the progress of the Christian soul in the path of perfection as it is marked out for us by ascetic writers. Accordingly, I have, in the present volume, abandoned the plan of republishing the chapter on the Liturgical Year, and rewritten it from the latter point of view.

Another explanation is due to the reader. It may be said that the list of lives of saints which I have given is a somewhat arbitrary one. But my selection from those given in the Roman Martyrology has been in all instances governed by the object of putting before my readers those who exemplify the workings of the mind of the Church, her teachings, her reforms, her miraculous powers and her assimilation of devotions: the latter in many instances being the result of special inspirations by her divine Head to one or other of her children. In conclusion, I should like to say that if one of those who had the grace of being born in her bosom, or the still greater grace of being called there by a special miracle of God's goodness, is led by means of it to a higher appreciation of the claims of the "Mother of us all," the "Mighty Mother"—as Cardinal Newman called her—I shall be more than repaid.

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The Church and the Christian Soul

THE LITURGY OF THE CHURCH

The Liturgy of the Church dates from the very birth of Christianity. We can trace its origin to the Last Supper, when "Jesus took bread and blessed and broke and gave to His disciples and said: Take ye and eat; this is my body. And taking the chalice, He gave thanks and gave to them saying: Drink you all of this, for this is my blood of the New Testament which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 26-8). "Do this for a commemoration of me" (Luke xxii. 19). "And a hymn being said, they went out unto Mount Olivet" (Matt. xxvi. 30).

The need of sacrifice in some form or other, accompanied with prayer and psalmody is implanted in the human heart. The earliest records of all nations testify to it. This God-given instinct in the case of the Jews, the Chosen People, received in the Mosaic law the sanction of the Creator, and the ritual which accompanied the sacrificial feasts and offerings was laid down by it with the utmost precision. But solemn and imposing as were these ceremonials, they were but a type of what was to come. Their mission was ended when the great High Priest—Son of God and Son of Man—delivered Himself for us on Mount Calvary, an oblation and a sacrifice "that He might be a propitiation for the sins of the people." Then were the great barriers broken down which divided mankind, and the words of the inspired writer fulfilled: "For from the rising of the

sun even to the going down, my Name is great among the Gentiles; and in every place there is Sacrifice and there is offered to my Name a clean Oblation: for my Name is great among the Gentiles saith the Lord of Hosts."*

The Sacrifice of the Mass which commemorates the Sacrifice of Mount Calvary, and renews it in an unbloody manner in obedience to Christ's command, is therefore the central feature of the Catholic religion. It is on account of the institution of the Eucharistic rite that churches have risen up in every land. It is in honour of holy Mass, in order that its celebration should be accompanied with fitting pomp and magnificence, that great cathedrals and basilicas were erected as soon as the Church emerged from the catacombs; and the introduction of the pointed arch into Europe—the glory of Gothic architecture—enabled a believing world to raise up those majestic structures, which, beautiful in their decay, testify to the piety and zeal of our ancestors in the ages of faith. And wherever Mass is offered up and men have gathered together to do homage to their Creator and receive the Bread of Life from the hand of His ministers, there the light of faith is kept burning and the promise of Christ that He would not leave His children orphans, that He would come to them, is fulfilled.

But the Mass, though the greatest, is not the only homage the Church of Christ offers to her heavenly Spouse. In the Divine Office she offers seven times a day a sacrifice of praise to her God. For has she not made her own the words of the son of Sirach:

"'Glorify the Lord as much as you can, for He will yet exceed,
And His magnificence is wonderful.
Blessing the Lord, exalt Him as much as you can,
For He is above all praise.
When you exalt Him, put forth all your strength and be not weary,
For you can never go far enough.
Who shall see Him or declare Him—
He is from the beginning."†

* Mal. i. 11. † Ecclus. xliii., 32-3-4.

Like the Mass, the Divine Office (that is the recitation of psalms and hymns of praise and supplication) dates from the earliest ages of the Church. We know that it had taken a definite form in the time of St. Ambrose and St. Augustine; and the great Patriarch of the West, St. Benedict, in ordering the Office for his monks, frequently uses the expression "as chants the Roman Church."

But the Divine Office is more than a recitation of psalms and canticles. . . . It forms a part of the Liturgical life of the Church of which Jesus Christ is Himself the Source and Origin. "Hence" (as Dom Guéranger remarks) "it is neither more nor less than the manifestation of Jesus Christ and His mysteries in the Church and the faithful soul. It is the divine cycle in which appear all the works of God each in its turn: the Seven Days of the Creation; the Pasch and Pentecost of the Jewish people; the ineffable visit of the Incarnate Word; His Sacrifice and His Victory; the Descent of the Holy Ghost; the Holy Eucharist; the surpassing glories of the Virgin Mother of God; the magnificence of the angels; the merits and triumphs of the saints. Thus the cycle of the Church may be said to have its beginning under the Patriarchal Law, its progress under the written Law and its completion under the Law of Love."*

The recitation of the Divine Office, fitly called by St. Benedict the "Work of God" (*Opus Dei*), is binding on all priests. It is also the special duty of religious, for, as their very name denotes, theirs is a life dedicated to religion; namely, the service of God. But it is also a prayer in which laymen may, and are encouraged by the Church to join. That this was the custom in primitive times is shown by a letter of Tertullian, who, when dissuading a penitent from engaging herself in marriage with a Pagan, urges as a reason that she would be unable to rise at night to recite the praises of God.

* "The Liturgical Year: Advent," p. 12, by Dom Gueranger. The writer has drawn largely from the storehouse of erudition contained in his fourteen volumes in the following pages.

THE CHURCH

As members of the Catholic Church we are all members of Jesus Christ. As long as we are in a state of grace we can claim the privileges and enjoy the blessings which Jesus Christ bequeathed to His disciples when He was taking leave of them; chief of these is the certainty of being directed by the Spirit of truth, the Paraclete, to Whose care He assigned His Church, with the promise He should abide with her for ever. In joining in the liturgical prayers of the Church we can claim the fulfilment of our Lord's promise that where three or four are gathered together in His name, He will be in the midst of them. We are also making a profession of that most consoling doctrine the Communion of Saints. For it can be then said of us: "You are come to Mount Sion and to the City of the Living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of Angels and to the Church of the first-born." What private prayer, however devoutly uttered, can compare in efficacy before the throne of God with that which the Spouse of Christ divinely inspired offers up unceasingly to her heavenly Bridegroom? Great indeed is the glory which is given to the Blessed Trinity, to our Saviour, to the Blessed Virgin and to all the Angels and Saints by this commemoration of the mysteries of our holy faith.

"If every year the Church renews her youth as that of the eagle, she does so because, by means of the liturgy, she is visited by her divine Spouse, who supplies all her wants. . . . The graces of all these divine mysteries are renewed in her; so that, being made fruitful in every good thing, the mystic garden yields to the Spouse in every season, under the influence of the Spirit. He breathes into her, the sweet perfume or aromatic spices."*

* "The Liturgical Year," Vol. I., p. 12.

ADVENT.

THE ecclesiastical year opens with the season of Advent. The first mention of fasts and spiritual exercises in preparation for the commemoration of the birth of our Saviour is to be found in the "History of the Franks" (Vol. II.), by St. Gregory of Tours. We learn from it that St. Perpetuus, a predecessor of St. Gregory in the see of Tours, decreed about the year 480, that a weekly fast of three days should be held from the feast of St. Martin till Christmas. Similar regulations, mentioning the same length of time for Advent and equally a fast of three days a week, were enjoined by the Council of Macon in 582. Moreover, it was ordained that "the Sacrifice should be celebrated according to the Lenten rite." This observance extended likewise to the laity, and was popularly known as St. Martin's Lent. By the middle of the ninth century the forty days of Advent had been shortened to four weeks, as we learn from a letter from Pope St. Nicholas to the Bulgarians.

Efforts were made by several Popes—Dom Guéranger mentions specially those of Innocent III. in the thirteenth, and Benedict XIV. in the eighteenth century—to recall the duty of the laity, as well as of the Religious Orders, to the observance of the four weeks of Advent as a time of fasting and penance. By degrees, however, the discipline of the Church has adapted itself to the growing dislike, possibly inability, to fast, so characteristic of modern times, and the faithful are now everywhere dispensed from all such obligations in Advent.*

In the spirit in which the Church keeps this holy season there is not, nor ever can be, any change. Her

* The Greek Church still enjoins a forty days' Advent, but with seven days of fasting only, on the plea that the Advent fast, being of monastic origin only, need not be observed so strictly as the Lenten, which is of apostolic institution.

liturgy commemorates, in the first place, the ardent longing of the holy patriarchs and prophets to gaze on the face of Him, the Promised One, the Desired of nations, Who was to save His people from their sins; and it reflects the spirit of the Baptist calling on all mankind to make ready for the coming of the Lord, and to prepare His ways by a loving desire to receive Him, and by heartfelt repentance.

Peter of Blois, in his sermon on Advent, speaks of three Comings of our Lord: "The first in the flesh, the second in the soul, the third at the judgment. The first was at midnight, according to the words of the Gospel: 'At midnight there was a cry made: lo! the Bridegroom cometh.' But this Coming is long since past, for Christ has been seen on the earth and has conversed among men. We are now in the second Coming, provided only we are such as that He may thus come to us; for He has said that 'if we love Him, He will come to us, and will take up His abode in us.' So that this second Coming is full of uncertainty to us, for who save the Spirit of God knows them that are of God? They that are raised out of themselves by the desire of heavenly things, know indeed when He comes, but 'whence He cometh, or whither He goeth, they know not.' As for the third Coming, it is most certain that it will be, most uncertain when it will be. For nothing is more certain than death and nothing less sure than the hour of death. 'When they shall say peace and security,' says the Apostle, 'then shall sudden destruction come upon them, as the pains upon her that is with child,' and they shall not escape. So that the first Coming was humble and hidden, the second is mysterious and full of love, the third will be majestic and terrible. In His first Coming, Christ was judged by men unjustly; in His second, He renders us just by grace; in His third He will judge all things with justice."

Preparation for the coming of our Lord, accompanied

with true inward repentance, and a longing desire for Him who should ever be the Object of our love, Emmanuel—God with us—is the special note of this period of the ecclesiastic year. This ardent desire for God, to see Him in some sort, veiled indeed, but "looking through the lattices," has been at all times and in all ages the disposition of the heart in which God holds the first place.

St. Augustine says "the life of every good Christian is a continual desire towards God," and Hilton, the great mystic writer of the fourteenth century, commenting on these words says: "Such desire is of great power and virtue and is a loud cry in the ear of God. The more fervently thou desirest, the louder thou criest, the better thou prayest and the wiser are thy thoughts. . . . Perfect love maketh God and the soul to be as if together they were one. But such perfect union cannot be had in this life save by desire and longing after it. If a man loveth another that is absent, he greatly desireth his presence: just so spiritually, for as long as we are in this life, our Lord is absent from us, so that we can neither see Him nor feel Him as He is, therefore all that we can do here is to have a desire and great longing and thirsting to be present with Him, and to see Him in His bliss, and to be fully and perfectly united with Him in love."*

The Church, to emphasize this note of expectation, suspends the angelic canticle, the *Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax*, at Mass during Advent, excepting on the feasts of saints. By the colour of her vestments used by the priests, the sombre purple, which is worn on all days excepting on the feasts of the greater saints, she also draws attention to that attitude of penitential awe and anxiety with which, in sympathy with the attitude of the patriarchs and prophets of old, she prepares for the coming of the Messiah. The deacon,

* "How to Lead a Spiritual Life," ch. viii.

at the end of the Mass, instead of dismissing the people with the customary *Ite Missa est* uses the words *Benedicamus Domino* as if to invite them to persevere in their service and praise of God. But the Church, mindful that the Redeemer has come, that He is being daily offered up on her altars, does not interrupt the special word of rejoicing, that of Alleluia, at Mass or at the Divine Office.

THE PURGATIVE WAY

THE Church (as Dom Guéranger reminds us) links the changes in the ecclesiastical year with the Christian soul's progress in the way of perfection. Thus in the first part—that from the beginning of Advent to the end of Lent—we may mark his entrance and progress in the Purgative way; in the Paschal time, between Easter and Whitsunday, the Illuminative way; and in the time after Pentecost when the soul has been replenished with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the Contemplative or Unitive way. We learn from this that our souls would gather little for their profit were we to follow the liturgy prescribed by our mother the Church with minutest care and attention unless these outward acts were accompanied with a true inward turning of the heart to God. To do otherwise would be to incur the danger of a reproach such as God addressed to the people of Israel: "This people honoureth Me with their lips but their heart is far from Me."

Thus we read, "in actions of liturgical worship during the time that is spent nigh the altar (which carries the Body of Christ and which is itself the Body of Christ), if 'the word' of the heart ceases, worship and service become mere formality—only the outward activity of the hands and the lips. But the servant of God knows how in Office and Liturgy to 'sanctify the Lord Jesus in his heart.'"*

* "A Retreat," p. 305, by Bishop Hedley.

The Purgative way is the first step, therefore, of the ladder of perfection. It is for one who takes this step, to make a determined effort in the direction of freeing himself from the tyranny of the passions; and, as the apostle says, to "purge out the old leaven," so that the grace of God may find no obstacle in his soul. It is also a spiritual awakening by which the soul is made to realize her wants and infidelities and God's designs upon her. With no two men does He deal alike. Some He treats as He treated the great apostle of the Gentiles, bringing them, by a great blow of ill-fortune, some signal chastisement, to His feet. But more often it is by the ordinary channel of everyday events that He conveys His secret intimation to the souls of men, and causes in them that inward reformation or renewal of fervour to which we give the name of conversion. The holy Abbot Anthony was accustomed to say that sanctity was the result of repeated conversions. It is true that the Christian receives in baptism (to which the Fathers have given the name of the sacrament of Illumination) the infused theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, as well as all the graces necessary for him in his pathway through life. Again, as he emerges from infancy, those life-giving fountains of grace, the sacraments of penance, of confirmation and the holy Eucharist are his for the asking. But the tendency to evil, fatal inheritance bequeathed to us by our first parents, survives to the end; so that we must all confess with St. Paul that "we do not that good which we will, but the evil which we hate that we do." Darkness of soul, spiritual sloth and an enfeebled will are a direct consequence of it. These are the enemies of salvation, therefore, that have to be encountered and defeated in the Purgative life.

St. Augustine's prayer, "*Domine! Noverim Te, noverim me,*" "May I know Thee, may I know myself," should be in the heart and on the lips of everyone who is in earnest about his soul's salvation. Many a man

goes through life without any serious effort to see how his soul stands with God. "We mostly look out of windows all our life." We look *out* because we fear, by looking within, we shall find what will cause us serious uneasiness and even possibly force us to take steps which will involve us in pain and discomfort. And then death comes upon us and our eyes are opened —happy if we are not of the number whose cry evermore is: "Alas, the serpent has deceived us!"

Spiritual writers are agreed in saying that the principal object to which Satan directs all his energies is to prevent men from praying. "Come to Me and you shall be enlightened," the Holy Spirit tells us through the mouth of the Prophet; and the devil represents to us that prayer is not necessary, that we have no time for it; or, in concert with the world, plunges us in dissipating thoughts which disgust us for it.

St. Teresa, who has been called the apostle of prayer, puts such thoughts very forcibly before us in her "Mansions of the Soul."* She describes how she was shown the soul in the form of a single diamond, or purest crystal, in which, as in Heaven, there were many mansions. It would be impossible, she goes on to say, to exaggerate the beauty of a soul in a state of grace. For if we reflect that, as Holy Writ repeats twice, it was made after God's image and likeness, what words can do justice to its perfections? God Himself inhabits this castle; for has He not said: "If anyone love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and take up our abode in him." "How then," she asks, "can we enter our delightful castle? 'But,' someone may say, 'what are you talking about? The soul itself is a castle and you invite her to go into it. One might as well tell a person to go into a room which he is already occupying!' Know then that there are many souls who never go

* "Mansions of the Soul," ch. ii.

further than the outer courts. Never having taken the trouble to penetrate inside these beautiful mansions, they know nothing of the glories which they contain. . . . The soul, recollected within itself, alone, inhabits this divine castle and prayer is the only door to it." The saint then develops the allegory at considerable length. She shows how, in the first two mansions, which represent the Purgative way, the soul works her way by prayer and penance to the third mansion in which the graces and beauty of the Illuminative life begin to dawn upon her. Finally, in the sixth and seventh mansions, as she approaches nearer to Him Who, seated in the centre of the castle as on a throne, is the source of all grace, she attains to perfect union with her God.

It is with the first and second mansions, therefore, in which St. Teresa gives a vivid picture of the soul struggling with sin and her evil habits, that we are now concerned. The saint represents the latter under the form of adders and serpents who slink into the mansions, and unless the soul makes a determined effort to fight against them, even if they do not cause her death, they yet wound and cripple her, and reduce her to such a state of weakness that she is unable to make any effort to advance further.

As Satan owed his fall from the highest heaven to pride, and brought about that of Adam and Eve by an appeal to theirs, so does he seek to use, by unceasing effort, this instinct innate in man, and another which is akin to it—self-love—to draw him away from his service of his Creator. It is to the destruction of these two adders, these poisonous serpents from which a numerous progeny spring, that the Christian soul must address herself if she wishes to free herself from the tyranny of her passions. It is related of a holy monk of the desert, that as he was engaged in praying to God to enlighten him with regard to his progress in His service, an angel appeared to him and told him to dig.

He set to work and dug for a long time; when he was weary and exhausted, the angel appeared again and told him to go on digging. A third time the angel appeared and repeated the same words and again a fourth time; and this time he said: "Now build." By this, he was made to understand that to build the edifice of sanctity, the foundations must be laid deep in humility.

Our masters in the spiritual life tell us that we shall never attain to perfect humility in this life. The saints possess it in proportion to their nearness to God and union with Him. And high above all angels and saints, Mary, the Mother of God, attained to it in a plenitude such as no other human being has ever reached. And it was due to this sublime pre-eminence that "the Lord," as she declared in her Magnificat, "regarding the lowliness of His handmaid," chose her to be the Mother of the Incarnate Word. We shall never be perfectly humble in this life, because we shall never realize what sin is in the sight of God, or persuade ourselves, in a manner sufficiently vital and practical, of the undeniable truth that all we can lay claim to are our sins and that everything good in us comes to us from God or is the effect of His divine grace working in us. Only in Heaven shall we see it, for there, "in His light, we shall see light."

Hilton has some beautiful thoughts on this subject. He says: "What is humility but truth? verily nothing else. And therefore, he that through grace can see Jesus, and how it is He doth all and himself just nothing but suffer Jesus to work in him what He pleaseth, he is humble."* In another place, speaking of the difficulty of acquiring the virtue of charity, he says: "On the other hand, Our Lord bestoweth no gift so freely or so gladly as He doth it. How then, thou sayest, art thou to obtain it? Be meek and lowly of spirit and thou shalt have it, and what is easier to be done than to be humble? Nothing, forsooth.

* "Scale of Perfection," pt. I., ch. iv.

It followeth, then, that there is nothing so easy to be had as charity; be humble and thou shalt have it. Thus said St. James: 'God resisteth the proud,' but giveth grace to the humble which grace is strictly charity. Hence, according to the measure of thy humility will be the measure of thy charity. . . . If thou hast humility, then thou wilt have perfect charity and this is the best of all possessions. The other we must necessarily have if we will be saved; this we must ever desire and labour for. And now, if thou askest me who is truly humble, I shall say no more about humility but simply this: he is truly humble that really knoweth himself as he is."*

Prayer without humility is a mere ploughing the sands. But prayer with humility—that is, with a deep consciousness of our nothingness in God's sight and our need of Him—conquers the Heavens. The Sacrament of Penance is of supreme importance in the life of the Christian who is plodding along the Purgative way. To many the confession of venial sins is but a preliminary to receiving Holy Communion. They betake themselves to this great sacrament as seldom as possible and then go through it in such a perfunctory manner that, even if they do not make an invalid confession, they assuredly do not receive to the fullest extent the graces attached to it, of which the special one is purity of heart.

Confessions may fall short on any of the three points: examination of conscience, contrition and purpose of amendment. The first may be imperfect—and very often is—because we fail to grasp one or two simple rules about the commission of sins. One rule is that nothing is matter for confession for which we cannot make a purpose of amendment. Such accusations, therefore, as: "I have had distractions at prayer." "I have been tempted to envious or vain-glorious thoughts," and such like are waste of the priest's time and our

* *Ibid.*, pt. III., ch. vi.

own. We shall be liable to distractions as long as we live, and temptations are permitted by God in order that we may merit by rejecting them. We cannot repent of them or make resolutions against them; so unless the distractions are voluntary and we have consented to the temptations, they are not matter for absolution. St. Francis de Sales' rule is one which should be carefully studied: "Our examination of conscience," he says, "should be reduced to a search for our passions." Ignorance of our passions, of those vipers and adders of the soul of which St. Teresa speaks, is one of the causes of our benefiting so little by our frequent confessions. For instance, we accuse ourselves of being impatient so many times. To our confessor, and equally to ourselves, if we are of the number of those who do not look below the surface because we dread what we shall find there, the sin of impatience is a trifling one. But if we ran this defect to ground, and still more, if we asked the candid opinion of those who have suffered from it, we should possibly find that it had its root in an ungovernable pride which makes us a trial to those we live with and a cause of sin in them as well as in ourselves. It is the same of many other accusations we make in confession. We harbour in our minds the seeds of many deadly sins: such as jealousy, duplicity, pride, covetousness, and make little account of them even when they find vent in words and actions. To mention them as temptations is quite misleading. It is on these points we should examine our consciences most carefully; begging our Lord to help us to cast these disorderly affections and bad passions out of the temples of our hearts in the same way that He cast the money-lenders out of His Father's House, so that they may become a fit dwelling for Him. Spiritual writers make a great distinction between habitual sins and venial sins into which even the holiest souls may occasionally fall from inadvertence. They tell us that persons who are habitually, and without

making any contrary efforts, ill-tempered, untruthful, slothful in religious matters, free in speech, careless of their neighbour's reputation, lax on the point of charity, are in great danger as regards their soul's salvation. This is especially the case with regard to sins of detraction. In no other sin is it so easy to pass over the dividing line between venial and grievous sin. A man or woman, who has the habit of retailing scandalous stories about their neighbour, may be compared to one walking blindfold at the edge of a precipice: a step to the right or left and he falls into the abyss. Shame on account of our sins is an important feature of contrition. We should never try to evade it by putting our sins in an ambiguous way; rather should we endeavour to make it highly meritorious by uniting the confusion which we rightly feel, having deserved it, with the shame with which our innocent Saviour expiated our sins when dying, naked and deserted, on the Cross.

Important as is a humble and candid confession of our sins, we should look upon our act of contrition and our purpose of amendment as being of even greater moment. We must ask these graces of God, imploring of Him to send His heavenly Spirit into our souls to enlighten us, and not only to give us a knowledge of our sins but a true and heartfelt sorrow for them. The crucifix will teach us more than anything we can read or hear said on this subject. "Behold Him," we should say to our hearts, "dying for thee. He is expiating by untold tortures of mind and body thy misdeeds, and all He asks of thee is to turn to Him, striking thy breast as did the publican, and saying from the bottom of thy heart: 'O Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.'" We should then resolve, with the help of His grace, never to offend Him again, and, by making definite resolutions, especially with regard to those sins into which we habitually fall, endeavour to avoid them for the future.

It is with the same profound sentiment of our utter unworthiness that we should prepare to receive our divine Saviour in Holy Communion. The Scripture tells us that He humbled Himself to death, even to the death of the cross; and in this adorable Sacrament, He has not only found a means of humbling Himself yet more, but of giving us an example which it should be the object of our whole lives to profit by and follow. For "the state to which our Lord reduces Himself in the Eucharist, in order to satisfy the requirements of His tender love, brings Him before us exactly in that form of holiness which our own spiritual life should assume."* Love, patience, forgiveness of injuries, dependence on God's providence and detachment from creatures, making use of the world as though we used it not, are what God asks of us. Is this not precisely the life led by our Lord under the sacramental veil? Why is it, therefore, that nourished daily, as so many of us are, on this divine food, united to Him in so close a manner that the nearest parallel we can find to it, is that of the Blessed Mother to her divine Son when, for nine months, she bore Him in her womb, we still bear so little resemblance to our adorable Model. Like people in bad health, who eat plentifully but get no good out of their food, so we go on, day after day, partaking of this divine Food, this medicine of immortality, and still fall into the same sins and infidelities. Confidence in God, and a great desire to please Him, and distrust of self, are the only sure remedies for this unhappy plight—as they are the only safe foundations of the spiritual life. If we came to Him, grovelling as the Magdalene did, and with greater reason, as she did not sin against the light, owning our miseries and realizing that we are incapable of amendment without His gracious assistance, He would assuredly turn to us and bless us and send us away strengthened and comforted.

What a terrible lesson is conveyed to us by St. Gertrude

* "Spiritual Life and Prayer," p. 64, by C. Bruyère.

on using the tongue, on which the Body of our Lord has rested in holy Communion, in uncharitable and idle discourse. For she was instructed (she tells us in her Revelations) that one who approaches the Holy Table after such sins without repentance " is like a person who gathers a heap of stones at the threshold of his door, to throw at his guest's head when he comes to visit him."

The ultimate object of all religious exercises is the union of the soul with God. The first and greatest obstacle is sin—hence the meaning and nature of the Purgative life. But we need not wait till we have got rid of our evil tendencies to aim at union with Him. To all, in a state of grace, He says : " I am the vine and you are the branches." What could be more explicit than these words ? By taking upon Him our fallen nature, He, the Son of God, incorporates us into Himself, so that we become one with Him. And in His solemn invocation of His Father after the Last Supper, He prays, not only for His apostles, " but for them also who, through their word, shall believe in me, that they all may be one as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."

" It is no longer you, O man " (He seems to say), " who work and suffer, it is I—the Son of God—who work and suffer with you and in you. Your hands are feeble, your heart is oft-times defiled, there is nothing in your actions, you, who have fallen in Adam and partake of his disgrace, to merit an eternal reward. But see what I have done for you ! By My Incarnation, by the shedding of My blood to wipe out your sins, and by sending you My Holy Spirit, I have adopted you into a heavenly fraternity. The Father, looking upon you, sees you clothed in My vesture, adorned in My merits, washed in My Blood, and thus seeing, is well-pleased with you." Should not such unspeakable love on the part of our Divine Saviour evoke some love in return from

us ? If it does not, it is only because we do not ask this love of Him with sufficient earnestness.

" Fac cor amans Jesu mei,
*Fac ut nos amemus Te "**

should be the constant word of our hearts. And this love is so all-important in the sight of God that He has told us, in unmistakable words, that we should use all our faculties to acquire it.

How few remember that God in the first and greatest commandment bids us love Him with all our minds, as well as with all our strength, and with our whole heart. And this divine command extends to those who are dependent on us for knowledge and example. A great responsibility rests on parents, in these days when they are enjoined to bring their children to the Holy Table as soon as they have reached the age of reason, to impress on the minds of the little ones, both by word and example, the immense importance of the step they are taking.

A child's innocence is the best preparation it can make to receive the Lover of Innocence, Who said with His own blessed lips : " Suffer little children to come to Me and forbid them not." But parents are apt to forget how soon the age of childhood passes, and that it is succeeded by that difficult age in which the boy or girl requires careful guidance for it can no longer plead innocence or ignorance for its misdeeds before the all-seeing eye of God. For the knowledge in things spiritual that is sufficient at the age of seven, is utterly insufficient at seventeen. It is very necessary, therefore, that a mother, as her children grow older, should make up, by systematic instruction, for what is wanting in their religious training and education. Above all should she seek to instil into her children's hearts a great love

* Those who are not familiar with the language of the Church may prefer making the ejaculation : " Heart of Jesus, I implore that I may love Thee ever more and more," or similar ones in the vernacular. St. Francis de Sales, however, tells us that there is more unction to be found in using the " holy Latin tongue."

of their merciful Redeemer; for if the "fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," it is but the foundation on which we should build the edifice of that tender and confiding love which it was Christ's object, in every word and action of His life, to inspire. And with this object what can we do better than read with them the story of the gospels, for never should we forget that every action of our divine Saviour has a sacramental as well as an imitable value. Virtue goes out of Him as we study His sayings and contemplate that adorable life, just as it did upon the poor woman who said to herself, "If I can but touch the hem of His garment, I shall be healed."

Great merit and graces, we are told by spiritual writers, are attached to those who give instructions in spiritual doctrines. It has been said that he who teaches gains even more in fervour of spirit than he who is taught. And can anyone doubt that those consoling words: "They who instruct others to justice shall shine as stars for all eternity," are applicable to parents not less than to those to whom the commission has been given to feed the lambs of the divine Shepherd.

Where can we find grace and strength, moreover, except in the study of His heavenly doctrine, to tread the Purgative way which leads to Eternal Life? Only in listening to Him shall we realize the truth of His words, that His yoke is sweet and His burden light. To the natural man, as opposed to him whose eyes have been opened by divine grace, those words, "Deny thyself, take up thy cross and follow Me," will always sound harsh and forbidding. For has he not always sounding in his ears another voice, that of the enemy of his salvation, backed up by every instinct of his nature which clamours for ease, pleasure and self-indulgence? But here again our loving Saviour, turning to us, pleads as He did with His disciples: "Will you also go away and leave Me?" Can we make Him any answer but the one made by Peter:

"Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of Eternal Life."

"Flee we to our Lord and we shall be comforted, touch we Him and we shall be made clean; cleave we to Him and we shall be sure and safe from all manner of perils . . . blessed mote He be!"*

SUNDAYS IN ADVENT

The First Sunday in Advent is known in the early liturgies as the *Ad te levavi* Sunday, from the first words of the Introit. The station is on this day held at St. Mary Major.† The Church, in the night office, takes her lesson from Isaias, and she continues to use the Messianic prophecies contained in that book throughout Advent. How few rise in the night in these days to meditate on these great themes and to chant their glories! But if we cannot do this, let us at least join with holy Church in celebrating them.

> "Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken: I have brought up children, and exalted them, but they have despised Me. The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib, but Israel hath not known Me and My people have not understood."

Should not those reproachful words find an echo in our own hearts? Have we not gone after false gods? Has the worship of mammon found no place in our souls? If so, now is the time to repent. Now is the acceptable time, now the day of salvation; our divine Saviour is ever waiting, knocking at the door of our hearts, pleading to be let in. Can we withstand His loving voice? He has no need of us, *we* have the utmost need of Him,

* "Revelations of B. Juliana of Norwich," ch. 76.

† The stations were formerly processions in which the Faithful, headed by the clergy, repaired to some given church where the Office and Mass were celebrated. St. Gregory the Great restored this practice, which dates from the earliest times and which still exists, though it is less solemnly observed.

and yet He would seem to make Himself our debtor—so great is His desire for our salvation.

In the epistle at Mass, taken from St. Paul's to the Romans (ch. xiii.), the same warning note is struck by holy Church, "Brethren, know that it is now the hour for us to rise from sleep. For now our salvation is nearer than we believed. The night is passed and the day is at hand. . . . Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ."

Those words, "put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ," are full of significance. They recall to our minds, by a striking imagery, the close union there is between us and our divine Head, and remind us that, in very truth, we are "members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones." Mother Juliana of Norwich puts this great truth very forcibly in her Revelations in the quaint English of the fifteenth century: "For as the bodie," she writes, "is clad in the cloath, and the flesh in the skin, and the bones in the flesh, and the heart in the bulke, so are we soule and bodie clad and enclosed in the goodness of God: yea, and more homelie, for all they vanish and waste away, the goodness of God is ever whole and more nere to us without any comparison. For trulie, our Lover desireth that the soul cleave to Him with all the mightes and that we be evermore cleaving to His goodness, for of all things that heart can thinke, it pleaseth most God and soonest speedeth."*

We put Jesus Christ on when, by prayer and the grace of God, we imitate Him, bringing our lives into conformity with His blessed life; when, by gazing on Him with a devout intention and the eye of faith, His resemblance passes into our souls and animates our actions so that in a very real mystic sense, we are not only with Him but become one with Him. Such, we learn, was the case with the saints; as for instance with St. Ignatius and St. Francis de Sales, who, from being hot-tempered and irascible, became meek and humble even as their divine Master; or in that of St. Francis of Assisi, who

* "Revelations of Mother Juliana of Norwich," ch. vi.

—besides an interior union with his Lord of so close a nature that Christ's characteristics seem to have passed into him, and become in very truth his—bore the very marks of Christ's blessed wounds on his body.

In the gospel, holy Church, knowing that man requires the element of fear as well as love, to turn him from a life of sin, puts before him the awe-inspiring words of our Saviour when speaking of the Last Judgment:

"At that time, Jesus said to His disciples: 'There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars: and upon the earth distress of nations by reason of the confusion of the roaring of the sea and of the waves: men withering away for fear and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world. For the powers of Heaven shall be moved; and then they shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty." (Luke, ch. xxi.)

The night office for the first Monday and all successive days begins with these words: "Come, let us adore our Lord the King who is to come." And again we read from the prophet Isaias: "Wash yourselves, be clean, take away the evil of your devices from my eyes: cease to do perversely, learn to do well: seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge for the fatherless, defend the widow. And then, come and accuse Me, saith the Lord, if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow, and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool."

In this cleansing of the soul, works of penance have a large share. No better preparation could be made for our Lord's coming into our hearts than to bathe them first in the Saviour's fountains of the sacraments of penance and the holy Eucharist, and to accompany these actions with works of mercy and charity to our neighbour; for He looks upon all we do for His little ones as done for Himself.

On the Saturday of the first week in Advent, we have the prophecy of Isaias: "Therefore the Lord Himself

shall give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and his name shall be called Emmanuel." St. Bernard, transported by these words, cries out: "The Word of God comes, but Mary is the way whereby He comes; it is from her virginal womb He issues, as the Bridegroom from the nuptial chamber. Let us endeavour, therefore, to go up to Jesus by Mary, for Jesus came down to us by her. By thee, O Blessed One that didst find grace, O Parent of Life! O Mother of Salvation, may we have access to thy Son! May He who was given to us by thee, receive us by thee! May He acknowledge thy purity, and for its sake, pardon our impurities! May He give us forgiveness of our pride because of the pleasure He took in thy humility! May thy abundant charity cover the multitude of our sins! May thy glorious fruitfulness get us fruitfulness of merit! Our Lady! Our Mediatrix, Our Advocate! Reconcile us with thy Son! Commend us to thy Son! Present us to thy Son!"

The feast of the Immaculate Conception, which is celebrated on the 8th of December, falls usually in the first week in Advent. The feast of the Conception of our Lady has been kept by the Greek Church, as we learn by the ceremonial, or, as it is called, the Type of St. Sabas, as early as the sixth century. In the eighth century, it was celebrated by the Gothic Church in Spain, and in that country, four centuries later, it was kept under its present title of the feast of the Immaculate Conception. Sixtus IV. was the first Pope to have the feast of the Conception of the B.V.M. proclaimed in Rome, which was done in the year 1476. Though the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was only defined as *de fide* in 1854 by Pius IX., it had long been the belief of the Universal Church. The teaching respecting it has been summed up in three comprehensive words: *"Potuit, decuit, ergo fecit."* It was possible, it was fitting, therefore He did it.

We should give a little time to the study of the epithets

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the Church gives to the Mother of God, which are mostly taken from the Scripture, and which foreshadow, in mystical language, the place she was to hold in the scheme of man's redemption. Thus she is saluted in the gradual of the Mass: "Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honour of our people. Alleluia, Alleluia." The words from the Book of Proverbs are referred to her in the epistle: "The Lord possessed me in the beginnings of His ways," etc. The night office is full of allusions to her sublime dignity as Mother of the Word made flesh, and again and again the antiphon salutes her in the words: "Thou art all fair, Mary, and the stain of original sin is not in thee." The Church celebrates the octave of this feast with daily antiphons and commemorations of the Blessed Virgin.

On the Third Sunday of Advent, the nocturn begins with the prayer: "The Lord is now nigh; come, let us adore." The lessons are taken from the prophecy of Isaias (ch. xxvi.): "In that day shall this canticle be sung in the land of Juda: Sion the city of our strength; a Saviour, a wall, and a bulwark shall be set therein."

The epistle of Mass on this Sunday again reminds us of the near approach of the Long Desired—of Him who was to bring joy and consolation to man. "Brethren, rejoice in the Lord always: again I say rejoice. Let your modesty be known to all men: the Lord is nigh" (Phil. ch. iv.). The gospel, taken from that of St. John (ch. i.), gives the Baptist's account of his own mission and of what we have to do to prepare for the coming of the Redeemer. "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness," he said in answer to the Scribes and Pharisees, "make straight the way of the Lord."

The Lord is nigh, even at the gates, and He comes — as He ever does—with hands full of blessings to those who are prepared to receive Him. And this preparation

should consist in humble repentance of past infidelities to grace, and an earnest desire to make a more worthy return for His benefits in the future ; thus shall we make straight the way of the Lord to our hearts.

EMBER DAYS*

One of the earliest mentions we have of the Embertides is from the sermons of St. Leo the Great (440-61). He speaks of them as having reference to the cultivation or garnering of the fruits of the earth, and of occurring in each of the four seasons of the year. Many writers have seen their origin in the habit of pagan nations—such as the Roman—invoking the protection of their Gods at the time of harvest or vintage ; they unquestionably began in the West and spread thence to the Eastern Churches. Pope Gelasius (492-6) appointed ordinations to be held in the Embertides, and it is from this point of view we propose considering them. For there is no subject which should touch the Catholic heart more or serve to bring it more deeply in sympathy with the interests of our holy Mother the Church than the choice and sanctification of her ministers. Of them, as of himself, St. Paul used those remarkable words : " We are the coadjutors of God " (Cor. iii. 9). And St. Philip Neri, who was called by his contemporaries, the Apostle of Rome, so innumerable were the conversions he made by his teachings and example, was accustomed to say : " Give me ten zealous priests and I will convert the world." Could we therefore do anything more pleasing to God and more for His honour and glory than to offer up our prayers, Masses and Communions during these days that " His priests may be clothed in justice," and rise to the full height of their holy vocation ? Wednesday, Friday and

* These days are named liturgically Feria IV., Feria VI., and Sabbatum Quattuor Temporum. The German name for them is Quatember. Hence, probably, the origin of the word Ember. See Appendix.

Saturday of Ember week have Masses proper to the day, in which we read how the coming of the Redeemer, "the rod of the root of Jesse," was foreshadowed by the prophets; and of "the word of the Lord coming to John, the son of Zachary, in the desert," to announce His arrival.

On the Fourth Sunday of Advent, the Church has once more recourse to Isaias in the night office when giving vent to her joy and exultation at the near approach of the great day.

"The land that was desolate and impassable shall be glad and the wilderness shall rejoice and shall flourish like the lily. It shall bud forth and blossom, and shall rejoice with joy and praise. The glory of Libanus is given to it, the beauty of Carmel and Saron. They shall see the glory of the Lord and the beauty of our God. Strengthen ye the feeble hands, and confirm the weak knees. Say to the faint-hearted: Take courage and fear not. Behold your God."

In the Mass, we read the enraptured cry of the prophet of the Incarnation in the introit: "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the Just One. Let the earth be opened and bud forth a Saviour. The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the works of His hand."

In the epistle allusion is made to the dignity of the priesthood, and in the gospel our thoughts are once more directed to the great mission of the Baptist in the prophecy of Isaias. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His paths. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough ways plain, and all flesh shall see salvation."

A solemn antiphon addressed to the Messiah under one of the titles by which He is alluded to in Scripture, is sung daily during vespers from the 17th of December

to Christmas Eve. These antiphons* are the Church's special preparation for the feast, and the days on which they are said are known as the Greater Ferias.

FIRST ANTIPHON

O Wisdom, that proceedeth from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from end to end, disposing all things with strength and sweetness, come and teach us the way of prudence.

SECOND ANTIPHON

O Adonai and leader of the House of Israel who appeared to Moses in the fire of the flaming bush and gavest him the law on Sinai, come and redeem us by thy outstretched arm.

THIRD ANTIPHON

O Root of Jesse, who standest at the standard of the people before whom Kings shall not open their lips, to whom the nations shall pray: come and deliver us, tarry now no more.

FOURTH ANTIPHON.

O Key of David, and Sceptre of the House of Israel; who openest and no man shutteth; who shuttest and no man openeth; come and lead the captive from prison, sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death.

FIFTH ANTIPHON

O Orient! Splendour of Eternal Light, and Sun of Justice, come and enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

SIXTH ANTIPHON

O King of Nations and their Desired One and the Corner-Stone that makest both one; come and save man whom Thou formedst out of slime.

THE GREAT ANTIPHON IN HONOUR OF CHRIST

O King of Peace! that wast born before all ages, come by the golden gate; visit them whom Thou hast redeemed.

SEVENTH ANTIPHON

O Emmanuel, our King and Law-giver, the Expectation and Saviour of nations; come and save us, O Lord our God.

THE GREAT ANTIPHON TO JERUSALEM

O Jerusalem, city of the great God! lift up thine eyes round about and see thy Lord, for He is coming to loose thee from thy bonds.

* They are sometimes called the O's of Advent, as they begin with that interjection.

CHRISTMAS EVE

THE great characteristic of the liturgy of this day is, as it were, a holy impatience; a longing not to be restrained to look upon the face of the Incarnate God. Holy Church in the vehemence of her desire, cries out with Isaias: "For God's sake, I will not hold my peace, and for the sake of Jerusalem I will not rest, till her Just One come forth as brightness. Oh, that Thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down!"

While the Church on the eve of all the other great feasts begins to celebrate the approaching solemnity only at vespers, on this one she begins at lauds in the early morning to rejoice in His presence as if He had already come. Borrowing the words of Moses when he announced the fall of manna on the following day to the people of Israel, she exclaims: "This day ye shall know that the Lord will come and in the morning ye shall see His glory." "For is He not the Bread of Life which was to come down from Heaven, and is He not about to be born in Bethlehem, the House of Bread?" Again in the responsories of the night office we read:

"Sanctify yourselves this day and be ready; for on the morrow you shall see the majesty of God amongst you. Be ye constant; ye shall see the help of the Lord upon you. Fear not Judea and Jerusalem. To-morrow ye shall go forth, and the Lord shall be with you. Sanctify yourselves, ye children of Israel, and be ye ready, for to-morrow the Lord shall be with you." How beautiful too are the words taken from Holy Writ in which the prophets foretold this day of benediction, and which the Church uses in the introit and gradual of the Mass on Christmas Eve. "This day you shall know that the Lord will come and save us, and in the morning you shall see His glory." And "Give ear, O thou that rulest Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a sheep.

Thou that sittest upon the Cherubim, appear before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasses." And in the Offertory : " Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O Eternal Gates, and the King of Glory shall enter in."

We are accustomed to see the word vigil used for the eve of great feasts, but how few remember (and some perhaps are ignorant) that this word signifies that in the primitive Church, the laity as well as the clergy, spent the night in prayer : the former uniting with the ministers of God in singing the hymns and psalms which we call matins. Now all that remains of this holy custom is the mitigated fast or abstinence which goes by that name. Let us try at least to make up by the fervour of our spirit for the weakness of our flesh, and uniting ourselves interiorly with Mary and Joseph, ask them to give us a share of their ardent desire to gaze on the face of the Infant God.

CHRISTMAS DAY

THREE Masses are said by all priests in Holy Orders on Christmas Day. The first, which is said if possible at midnight, is offered up in honour of the birth of Jesus Christ in the stable of Bethlehem *in time*. The second or the Mass of the Aurora, in honour of the birth of our Saviour by grace in the hearts of the shepherds, the first fruits of Christ's Redemption. The third, in honour of the generation or birth of the Son of God from all eternity with His Father. The epistles and gospels of these Masses will give us abundant food for meditation on the mystery of the Incarnation.

" Come let us adore the Babe of Bethlehem, for He is exceedingly to be loved," is the cry of the seraphic saint of Assisi. Many saints have left us admirable

thoughts on this sublime subject, but to few has it been given to enter into the very heart of it in the same way as to the poor man of Assisi, or to have taught and preached " the secret of Jesus " as he has done.

To grasp the meaning of this secret, we must go in spirit before the throne of God, and adore Him there —the Ancient of days—in His Eternal Years. We must contemplate His omnipotence, His omniscience, His goodness, the richness of His mercy ; and from thence transport ourselves to the stable of Bethlehem and behold Him, the Son of God, one with His Father from all eternity, a little infant shivering in the cold of the winter's blast ; His mother a humble maiden, His foster-father a carpenter, His first worshippers shepherds. To mark still further His helplessness and abjection, the Angel, describing Him, says He is wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. What are we to learn from this ? Is it not that as the fallen Angels, proud in the possession of their matchless gifts and glory, and Adam and Eve in their desire to be as gods, rebelled in their pride against their Maker, so the Son of God, the Word made flesh, came to show us not only what was the fitting attitude of the creature, but even more the heavenly beauty and seemliness of a life of humble poverty ?

" O Lord Jesus ! " cries the seraphic saint, " show me the ways of Thy beloved Poverty ! Most truly, O Lord, is she the queen of virtues ; for Thou, leaving the dwelling of the angels, didst come down to earth that Thou mightest espouse her. And she clung to Thee so faithfully, that she began her service even when Thou wert in Thy Mother's womb. At Thy birth, she received Thee in the manger and the stable ; during Thy life, she so stripped Thee of all things that she would not allow Thee even a stone whereon to rest Thy head. In the conflict of Thy passion, she alone stood by as armour-bearer ; when Thy disciples fled,

she did not leave Thee, but fearlessly adhered to Thee with the whole band of her princes. In her strong embrace, Thou didst breathe forth Thy soul." "O my most poor Jesus," let us say with this great lover of God, if we cannot go as far as Thy blessed servant in asking Thee for a life of poverty, of humble self-annihilation such as Thou didst embrace for love of us, give us grace to submit to Thy divine will patiently and lovingly in the occasions Thou givest us of practising it. May our hearts be detached from all earthly riches and possessions, and may we ever remember that we are never nearer, nor more pleasing to Thee than when we humble ourselves, or have been humbled.

"Our Lord is very great and therefore to be feared.
Our Lord is very little and therefore to be loved."

Another thought should be prominent in our minds at this holy season. And that is to seek to make amends to our divine Saviour by our fervour and devotion for the indifference and ingratitude of those who ignore this feast or profane it by riotous living. In receiving Him in holy Communion, we may rejoice in the thought that we are giving Him a hospitality that was denied Him upon earth, for, "There was no room for them in the inn," the gospel tells us. And again, St. John says: "He came unto His own and His own received Him not," but, he adds, "as many as received Him, He gave them power to be made sons of God: to them that believe in His name, who are born not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God."

CHRISTMAS-TIDE

Happy those who, passing quickly through the Purgative Way, can now rejoice at finding themselves enjoying the light of their Saviour's countenance, in the Illumin-

ative Way. To those not so far advanced, let it be a consolation to be allowed to have a glimpse of that promised land—seeing it as Moses did from afar, and let it be a motive with them to renew their efforts to attain to it. The Church dedicates forty days to the celebration of this great feast. Moreover, even if an early Easter should be the cause of Septuagesima and Sexagesima Sundays interrupting its full course, though she substitutes purple for the white vestments of her ministers, she still continues to make the Christmas commemoration at her offices.

On the four days which succeed Christmas Day, the Church keeps the festival of three great saints and martyrs, and the feast of Holy Innocents. On the 26th is the feast of St. Stephen, proto-martyr. What more beautiful subject for spiritual reading and meditation could we find than the history of this saint in the Acts of the Apostles! Above all let us linger over the story of his death. Already we see the words of our Redeemer verified: "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all things to myself." For until the coming of Christ, we know that the common law of the Jews was an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But already "the little leaven" which in time was to leaven the whole mass, had begun to work in the minds of His followers. And so we read that Stephen, after having vindicated in words of fire the doctrine of his Master, his face all the while "as if it had been the face of an angel," when he is finally done to death by his persecutors, cries out with his last breath words almost similar to those uttered by Jesus from His cross: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And so "slept in the Lord." Is there anything that the Christian, even the fervent, practising Christian, finds more difficult of accomplishment than the perfect observance of this precept of forgiving injuries? Is it not an instinct born in us, and which it requires nothing less than a miracle to eradicate to love those

that love us, and to bear a deep-seated grudge against those who have done us an injury, moral or material, or even trampled on our feelings? And yet to those hearts in which the grace of God has triumphed, what happiness does forgiveness bring; and if this forgiveness is accompanied with hearty prayers for those whom the world would call our enemies, they will accomplish such things as Stephen's prayers for Saul accomplished. It will also secure for those who offer up those prayers a peace passing all understanding.

On the 27th, the Church keeps the feast of St. John the Evangelist and the beloved disciple of our Lord. Spiritual writers have drawn attention to the fact that St. John of all our Lord's Apostles was the only one who did not die a violent death, for the cauldron of boiling oil into which he was plunged left him unscathed. We know that the grace of martyrdom is one of the greatest God has in store for His children, so we cannot look upon St. John's immunity as a special mark of divine favour. But they tell us that St. John passed through the agonies of death in sharing—by compassion—with Mary, the Mother of God, and the Magdalene, the death of Jesus on the Cross; so that dying then he died no more, and his physical death like that of the Blessed Mother partook rather of the nature of a translation. We may learn an important lesson from this; for who does not dread the great change from this world to the unknown bourne "from which no traveller returns?" We dread it with justice; for the revelations of the saints go to show that it is the moment God chooses for the purification of the soul. And this not in anger but in mercy. They tell us that a want of reverence in the reception of the sacraments, and with regard to the graces given us which Christ has purchased for us at a great price—even at the cost of the shedding of His Blood—will be punished either before or after we have passed behind the veil by an acute perception of the majesty

we have offended. Newman puts these thoughts in words :

> " Thou wilt be sick with love, and yearn for Him
> And feel as though thou couldst but pity Him
> That one so sweet should e'er have placed Himself
> At disadvantage such, as to be used
> So vilely by a being so vile as thee.
> There is a pleading in His pensive eyes
> Will pierce thee to the quick and trouble thee ;
> And thou wilt hate and loathe thyself : for, though
> Now sinless, thou wilt feel that thou hast sinn'd
> As never thou didst feel "

A profound, lifelong devotion to the most sacred Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ is the best preparation for a peaceful death-bed. If during our lives we have continually " gone up the hill of frankincense and the mountain of myrrh " (C. of C., ch. iv.) which is Mount Calvary, and if we have daily and hourly " looked on Him whom we have pierced and mourned over Him as one mourneth for an only son, and grieved over Him as the manner is to grieve for the death of the first-born " (Zach. ch. xxii.) we may make sure of the company of the Blessed Mother, and of the tender mercy of her Son at that moment which is so feared by every child of Adam.

On the 28th is kept the feast of the Holy Innocents. They were too young to have merited by their actions, yet the Church sees in them martyrs, as they died for Christ's sake. Thus she hails them in her martyrology as " the flowers of martyrs." " *Salvete flores martyrum.*"

On the 29th, the Church celebrates the feast of St. Thomas of Canterbury, who shed his blood in defence of the liberties of the Church. A great example, and one that has been followed repeatedly in all ages down even to our own times. And it is one from which we may all learn ; for whatever may be our calling or vocation in life, we shall inevitably meet opposition in it from one of the three enemies of salvation : the world, the flesh, and the devil. To lay down our lives in defence of our faith is a glorious destiny reserved

to a chosen few. But to all, opportunities are given of maintaining the purity of their faith and principles in opposition to the world's standards; in suffering patiently from the disabilities which will ever accompany a religion whose glory it is to identify itself with its divine Master; to share His ignominy, and, in short, to be valiant servants of Christ.

THE CIRCUMCISION

WITH this feast, a new year begins, and to the Christian it conveys a special meaning; for it begins with the Holy Name, and with the first blood-shedding of the Son of God for man. "His name was called Jesus," are the opening words of the Gospel.

The virtues of the name Jesus have been very beautifully described by an English writer of the fifteenth century:

"If thou wilt be with God, and have grace to rule thy life and to come to the joy of love, fasten this name Jesu so fast in thine heart that it never comes out of thy thought. And when thou speakest to Him, and sayest Jesu through custom, it shall be in thine ear joy and in thine mouth honey, and in thine heart melody. For thou shalt think joy to hear the name of Jesu named, sweetness to speak it, mirth and song to think on it. If thou think on Jesu continually and hold it stably, it purgeth thy sin, it kindleth thy heart, it removeth anger, it doeth away sloth, it bringeth in love fulfilled of charity; it chaseth the devil, it putteth out dread, it openeth Heaven, it maketh contemplative men. Have Jesu often in mind, for all vices and phantoms it putteth from the lover of it. Also thereto, hail Mary often, both day and night, and then much joy and love shalt thou feel. Hold love in heart and in work, and thou hast all that we may say or write: in that hangeth all."*

* "A Book of the Love of Jesus" p. 15. Edited by R. H. Benson, M.A.

To this feast of the Infant Saviour, the Church joins a tribute of grateful love to the Virgin Mother. The great fact is ever present to her mind that Jesus came to us by Mary; and that as Eve, by the use she made of her free will, brought sin and its punishment, death, into the world, so the second Eve by her *Fiat*, co-operating with her Creator in the great work of the Redemption, brought the Life that was the Light of man into the world.

In the five solemn antiphons which are sung at Divine Office, the Church commemorates the dignities of the Mother of God, and salutes her by one of the names by which she is typified in Holy Writ.

THE EPIPHANY*

THIS great day, in which the Church celebrates the manifestation of our Lord's coming to the Gentiles typified by the Magi, is one of rejoicing throughout the Christian world. The epistle is from Isaias (ch. lx.). "Arise, been lightened, O Jerusalem, for thy light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold darkness shall cover the earth, and a mist the people, but the Lord shall arise upon thee and His glory shall be seen upon thee." The gospel from St. Matthew (ch. ii.) gives us the history of the wise men who, seeing the star in the East, followed it till it "stood over where the Child was, and they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

The angels summoned the shepherds to adore our Lord on the night of His birth. But the Magi (kings they were, we are told, in their own country) had further

* This feast is of older origin than that of Christmas. It originated in the East. Fr. McKee says of it that "it made its way into the West through Gaul: for we know that one of the last appearances of the Emperor Julian in a Christian church before his apostasy was at Vienne in Gaul (A.D. 361), on the Epiphany. A century later it had spread to Rome, for we have sermons of St. Leo preached on this feast." "The Church's Year," p. 86.

to come, encountered more difficulties, and had only a star for their guide. From this we learn that in spite of humble poverty, patiently endured, having the first claim on our divine Redeemer's graces, that riches and honours are no disabilities in His sight if the heart is detached from them. It is to the heart that God looks and to the will. It is not too much to say that he who takes the good things of life gratefully as coming from the hand of God, uses them in His service, and in the service of the poor with whom our Lord identifies Himself, saying : " What you do for the least of these, my little ones, you do for me," is equally pleasing to Him, and as certain of gaining an eternal reward. We read of the Magi that, opening their treasures, they offered Him mystic gifts : gold, frankincense and myrrh. Gold, the tribute to a king ; frankincense, denoting the homage and prayer which is reserved for God alone ; and myrrh, which typifies Christ's human nature. These things should have much meaning for us if, like Mary, we ponder on them in our hearts. God will never cease asking gifts from us, because He loves us too much to suffer any created object to divide His reign in our hearts. He is a jealous God, not for His own sake but for ours ; He is God for He hath no need of our goods. Thus if we are to be wise men, even as the Magi, we should prepare ourselves to sacrifice what we value most for His sake. It may be that He will ask us for gold—the gifts of fortune and what they bring with them. Or for sacrifices of heart or intellect ; of secret hopes and ambitions so intimate that they are known only to Him and our own souls. But whatever they may be, they will be accompanied with myrrh. For as myrrh preserves the natural body from corruption, so does the mortification of our wills and our passions preserve our souls from the corrupting influence of the world and prepare them for the coming of His Kingdom. Let this thought be our consolation. When, like the wise men, we have overcome all obstacles, have

accepted the sacrifices God asks of us in the order of His Providence, we shall find ourselves at His feet, and like them we shall "rejoice with exceeding great joy." And this joy, this peace which passeth all understanding, as man cannot give it neither can he take it away.

The gospel of the Sunday within the octave of the Epiphany is taken from that of St. Luke (ch. ii.). We read in it how He and His Blessed Mother and St. Joseph went up to Jerusalem, and "when they returned, the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem and his parents knew it not. . . . And not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem seeking Him. And it came to pass that after three days, they found him in the temple." It has been truly said that "the life of the Christian on earth is an alternate losing and seeking Jesus, and finding Him again in the Temple—which is his own soul."

Hilton has some very beautiful reflections to make on this subject: "Seek then Jesus whom thou hast lost, for He wishes to be sought after, and is desirous of being found, as He Himself saith: 'Everyone that seeketh, findeth.' The seeking is painful, but the finding is full of joy. Act, therefore, according to the counsel of the wise man, if thou wishest to find Him: 'If thou shalt seek wisdom (that is Jesus) as money and shalt dig for her as for a treasure, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and shalt find the knowledge of wisdom.'* It behoveth thee to delve deep in thy heart, for therein Jesus is hid, and to cast out perfectly all love and liking, all sorrows and fears for earthly things, and so shalt thou find wisdom that is Jesus. . . . And when thou hast found Him, that is, when, in purity of conscience, thou feelest the familiar and peaceful presence of our Blessed God-Man, Jesus Christ, or at least a shadow or glimmering of Him, thou mayest, if thou wilt, call all thy friends to thee to

* Prov., ch. ii., 4-5.

make mirth and rejoice with thee. Jesus is a treasure hid in the soul; therefore if thou couldst find Him in thy soul, and thy soul in Him, I am sure that for joy thereat thou wouldst part with the love of all earthly things to have Him!"*

We read on the Second Sunday after the Epiphany, the history of the "beginning of miracles" which "did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and He manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him." What could bring more forcibly before our minds the power exercised by the Blessed Mother over her divine Son? In the first place, He identifies Himself with her: saying, when she represents to Him the wants of the Master of the feast: "What is it to me or to thee?" Then He distinctly signifies His divine will. "My hour is not yet come." And yet, in spite of this declaration, He hastens the hour which He had before determined upon for the beginning of His public life at her intercession. Well may holy Church cry out to her "Our life, our sweetness and our hope." For Jesus, our life, came to us by her. She sweetens the pathway of life to us by preparing our hearts for Jesus to come to them, and though we may be unworthy—our hour not yet come—He will hasten it at her intercession.

In the epistle of the Third Sunday after the Epiphany, St. Paul gives a beautiful exhortation on the Christian duty of forgiveness of injuries. He would have us "provide good things, not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of men. If it be possible, as much as is in you, having peace with all men. . . . If thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat; if he thirst, give him to drink, for doing this thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good." St. Teresa, commenting on this duty of the forgiveness of injuries, tells us that it is the test of our love of God: "Because we can never know with certainty whether we really love God,

* "The Scale of Perfection," ch. iii., 2.

although there are some signs by which we may infer it; but we can more easily discover whether we love our neighbours. I cannot believe that a soul which has approached near to Mercy Itself, when she comes to understand what she really is, and the many heinous offences that God has forgiven her, could fail to pardon others instantly and from her heart, even, in perfect tranquillity and peace to cherish a friendly disposition towards those who have injured her. Because when a soul keeps before her the kindness and favour God has shown her by so many manifestations of His love, she is forced to rejoice at being afforded an opportunity of pardoning her enemies, that thereby she in turn may give some proof of the love which she bears to God."

In the gospel we read of two of the most striking of our Lord's miracles: His cure of the leper and of the centurion's servant. And these signal proofs of God's mercy are extolled in the offertory of the Mass in the words of the prophet: "The right hand of the Lord hath wrought strength; the right hand of the Lord hath exalted me; I shall not die but live, and shall declare the works of the Lord."

The Roman martyrology commemorates two saints during January, St. Agnes on the 21st and St. Francis de Sales on the 29th, who cannot fail to excite our love and devotion. St. Agnes, who belonged to a patrician family, was but twelve years of age when, being summoned before a Roman tribunal during the persecution of Diocletian, she confessed her faith, and being condemned to death earned a martyr's crown. An interesting ceremony takes place yearly in Rome on her feast. Two lambs, emblematic of the Lamb of God and of the innocent virgin who bore that name, are laid on the altar of the Basilica Nomentana, and after being blessed, are taken to a convent of nuns and reared by them. The fleece from these is yearly made use of for the pallium—a simple woollen stole which the Pope sends to all Patriarchs and Metropolitans under

his sway as the especial emblem of their jurisdiction. This garment is also a symbol of the sheep which the Good Shepherd carries on His shoulders and which were confided to the care of Peter and his successors. St. Ambrose, who lived within a century of her glorious martyrdom, celebrated it both in prose and verse, and the Church sings her praises in the Responsories of the divine Office taken from the *Acta Sanctorum*, which purports to be the very words uttered by the child-martyr.

"My spouse has set precious stones on my right hand and on my neck; He has hung priceless pearls in my ears. He has placed His sign upon my face, that I may have none other to love me but Him. . . . When I love Him, I am chaste; when I approach Him, I am pure. Milk and honey have I received from His lips, and His Blood has graced my cheek."

St. Francis de Sales, whose feast is kept on the 29th of January, is known all over the Christian world as the writer of "The Introduction to a devout Life;" of a "Treatise on the Love of God" and many other ascetical works; also as the Founder, in union with St. Jane Frances de Chantal, of the Visitation Order. His ardent zeal for souls and the sweetness of his disposition, in which he closely resembled his divine Master, won him the most astounding success in the missionary field. Whilst first priest, and afterwards Bishop, of Geneva, he is said to have brought back over fifty thousand of the inhabitants of the Chablais into the true fold. His sublime teaching, though it ranged over innumerable subjects, might be summed up in a few words; and those were: "Ask for nothing, refuse nothing," in short, a loving confidence in God. "We ought," he writes in one of his letters, "a hundred times a day, to cast our eyes on the loving providence of God, Who has His heart always turned towards us by foresight, as we should have ours always turned towards Him by confidence. . . . My God, what pleasure should our

understanding take in the frequent thought of Thy divinity since it is so good, so sweet, so beautiful, so kind towards all, so willing to communicate itself. Let the heavens combine against me, let the earth and elements rebel, let every creature declare war against my existence, I care not; it is enough for me that God is with me and I am with Him."[1] His holy death took place A.D. 1622.

THE FEAST OF THE PURIFICATION, OR CANDLEMAS DAY*

THE forty days have elapsed since the birth of our Lord, and Mary and Joseph, obedient to the law, go up to Jerusalem to make the prescribed sacrifice. Mary carried Jesus in her arms, and when we reflect for a moment, Who she presented in the Temple, and to Whom she presented this divine Child, no words we can use seem worthy of describing what was passing in her heart. For the first time since the beginning of the world, a creature had presented the Creator with an offering worthy of Him. At that moment, the prophecy was fulfilled: "I will move all nations, and the Desired of Nations shall come; and I will fill this House with glory. Great shall be the glory of this House, more than of the first, and in this place, I will give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts." God has taken possession of His Tabernacle. The figures of the Old Law are entirely superseded to make room for the reality—the living presence of the Son of God in His creation. For this divine gift of God to man will never be revoked. In the fulness of time, He will give it as His dying legacy to man; it will be perpetuated till time shall

* The earliest mention of this feast comes from the pen of a pilgrim, whose diary was discovered at Arezzo in 1885, and which is regarded by scholars as having been written at the end of the fourth century. The pilgrim, to whom the name was first given of Silvia, but to whom, owing to later investigations, savants have assigned that of Etheria, was a native of Spain, and a member of a religious order. She calls the Purification the "*Quadragesima de Epiphania.*"

be no more, in His Eucharistic life in the tabernacle and on the altar.

There are various opinions held about the origin of the procession and blessing of candles which takes place on this feast. But there is little doubt that it was instituted at the close of the fifth century, when the Roman people had not wholly renounced their pagan customs, and that these Christian celebrations were substituted for earlier rites which up to that time had been held in the month of February in honour of the heathen gods.

The blessing of the candles takes place before Mass. The prayers which allude to the symbolical meaning of the lighted candles should be read attentively, as they convey a great lesson on the meaning which holy Church attaches to such ceremonies. It has been the custom, in all ages, for the faithful to take candles with them to be blessed or to procure them from the priest, in order to light them in times of peril or when the Last Sacraments are being administered, as they are especially blessed for such occasions. The candles are held in procession wherever it is possible to carry out the ceremonies prescribed by the ritual; and are likewise lighted during the gospel and from the sanctus to the Communion during Mass. The lesson read at Mass is taken from Malachy (ch. iii.), in which the prophet speaks in inspired joy and awe of the coming of the Holy One of Israel:

"Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I send my angel and he shall prepare the way before my face. And presently the Lord whom you seek and the Angel of the Testament whom you desire, shall come to His Temple. Behold He cometh, saith the Lord of Hosts, and who shall be able to think of the day of His coming? and who shall stand to see Him? For He is like a refining fire, and like the fuller's herb, and he shall sit refining and cleansing the silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi and shall refine them as gold and silver."

What could be a more vivid account of the process the Christian has to submit to before God takes possession of His Temple—which is man's soul. He has in the first place to go forth and rise above his earthly nature, "the body of sin," as it is termed, which is ever tending downwards, and to seek for the Lord—the Angel of the Testament, by the fervent aspirations and desires of his heart. But this is not all. He must submit to a purifying process, to trials and crosses of every kind, for it is by these means and these alone that he will be prepared for the awful day of the coming of the Son of man to judge the nations of the earth. "The feast of the Purification," St. Francis de Sales tells us, "has no octave; it should continue all our lives. We must have our minds made up on two points: one to expect the growth of weeds in our garden, the other to have courage to witness their removal and to lend a hand ourselves. We must acknowledge the truth; we are miserable creatures who can scarcely do any good, but God, who is infinitely good, is pleased with our little works and 'the preparation of our heart' is agreeable to Him."

The gospel from St. Luke (ch. ii.) tells us how holy Simeon, being led "by the Spirit into the Temple," recognizes in the Child Jesus the long promised Messiah and breaks out into his glorious canticle of praise, the *Nunc Dimittis*, which the Church uses as her evening-song.

The epistle of the Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany (Rom. ch. xiii.) begins with the words: "Brethren, owe no man anything, but to love one another, for he that loveth his neighbour hath fulfilled the law." This is then the great lesson of this blessed time of the year. God has loved us with an everlasting love. He has taken upon Himself our human nature out of love. He comes to each one of us asking for our love, and the greatest proof we can give Him of our love, is to love our neighbour for His sake.

The gospel gives us the history of Jesus in the boat with His disciples, when "Behold, a great tempest arose so that the boat was covered with water." We also, each one of us, know what it is to be overtaken by storms in our journey through life. Are there not moments when our future looks so black that we know not how we shall have courage to face it? These are the opportunities He gives us for showing our faith and confidence in Him.

In silentio et fortitudo est spes nostra.
God knows, and I know not.
God sees and I see not.
God is doing the best for me and I do not understand, but I believe and adore and resign myself to His Holy Will.*

The epistle for the Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany is taken from that of the Colossians (ch. iii.), in which the duty of thanksgiving is strongly inculcated in two different passages: "Let the peace of Christ rejoice in your hearts wherein also you are called in one body, and be ye thankful." And again: "All whatsoever you do in word or in work, all things do ye in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father." How deeply our loving Saviour feels the ingratitude of His people, we know not only from the Scriptures but from the revelations of the saints. "I am silent and as one that seeth not," He complains to us, "and thou hast forgotten Me," and again: "My people have forgotten Me days without number."

The gospel is from St. Matthew (ch. xiii.), and puts before us the parable of the sower. What light is thrown by this Gospel upon God's dealings with man! The Scripture says of Him that He is a patient rewarder. Unlike man He is in no hurry to condemn, to punish. He waits till the end, and then He says to the reapers: "Gather up first the cockle and bind it into bundles to burn, but the wheat, gather ye into my barn." Who can fail to see in the cockle the idle and dissolute who, in the sight of the Master of the harvest, are but cum

* "Note in a retreat." Archbishop Ullathorne.

berers of the ground, and who receive with justice the treatment accorded to their deeds either in the penal fires of purgatory or the never-ending one of hell.

The epistle for the Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany is taken from St. Paul's to the Thessalonians (ch. i.), in which he congratulates them on the manner in which they had responded to the great gift of faith, "receiving the word in much tribulation, with joy of the Holy Ghost." What an echo these beautiful words will find in the minds of many who having gone through deep trials to attain to the knowledge of truth, receive in the joy of the Holy Ghost a hundred-fold reward.

The gift of faith is again the subject of the gospel, which is taken from St. Matthew (ch. xiii.) and puts before us our Lord's parable of the mustard seed which is indeed the least of all seeds, but when it is grown up, becomes the greatest of all herbs. Such, we learn from our Lord's own words, should be the growth of the tiny seed which He, the mighty Creator, sowed up and down the hills and roads of Galilee. And which, in the fertile ground of such hearts as John and Peter and Andrew, of the Magdalene and many more, sprang up and became as a mighty tree. But is it so in ours? Does it,—does our faith—overmaster and out-top all other interests in our lives? Is it not only to ourselves but to others, those amongst whom we live, who lean upon us, a source of power and strength so that like the birds of the air, they come and nest in our branches?

With Septuagesima Sunday, we begin the remote preparation for the Passion and death of our Redeemer which culminates with the Sacrifice on Good Friday. In the seventy days which elapse between this Sunday and Easter, the Doctors and Fathers of the Church have seen a figure of the Seven Ages into which Christian tradition has divided the past history of the world.

St. Augustine explains the hidden meaning of this period of the ecclesiastical year in these words: "There

are two periods of time : one, the present time which is spent in the temptations and tribulations of this life : the other, which shall be hereafter, and shall be spent in eternal security and joy. In figure of these, we celebrate two periods : the time before Easter and the time after Easter. That which is before Easter signifies the sorrows of this present life ; that which is after Easter, the blessedness of our future state. . . . Hence it is that we spend the first in fasting and prayer, and in the second we give up fasting and give ourselves up to praise."

Before considering this period of the liturgical year from the historical point of view, it would be advisable, in order that we should seize the whole teaching and message that it is intended to convey to our hearts, to see the position held by penance in the mind of God. The constant reference to penitential acts as being pleasing to God and a true mark of inward repentance, runs through every page of the Old Testament, and the words of our Lord recorded in the New Testament are equally conclusive : " Unless ye shall do penance, ye shall all likewise perish." The penance imposed upon Adam and Eve was for him labour, for her the pangs of child-birth ; and death, the crowning punishment of sin, for both. Again there is no break in the continuity of the practice of penance from the earliest ages down to our own. The forty days of Lent (according to the Doctors of the Church) were foreshadowed by the forty days and nights in which God chastised man for his sins in the waters of the Deluge. For forty years the people of Israel suffered in the desert for their obstinacy and ingratitude. Moses was made to fast forty days on Mount Sinai, and Elias on Mount Horeb before being admitted into God's presence. All these were types, as the Apostle says, " written for our instruction." That our Lord should have begun His public life with forty days' fast in the desert is a sublime mystery, and at the same time in harmony with all His teaching. For as He

said that " it behoved Him to fulfil all justice," having taken upon Himself the nature of man, He likewise took upon Himself the debt due to God by man for Adam's fall.

Let us pause for a moment in order to try to grasp the full meaning of our Lord's fast. We know that by His Incarnation, He took upon Himself man's nature in order to reconcile sinners with His Father ; but He had other objects as well. One was to show His boundless love for us. St. Thomas gives us a most perfect explanation of another in the exquisite line :

Se nascens dedit socius.

What a world of meaning underlies these words ! Being born, having assumed our nature, He gave Himself to us as our inseparable companion. Thus in our trials, our labours, our acts of penance, we may, if we choose, have Him as our yoke-fellow. He is more than ready, nay, His one desire is, to share our burden with us. He has already borne the chief part in His life of toil and self-abnegation which culminated on Mount Calvary. But His will is that we should be more than spectators of the august Sacrifice. He desires that we should share in it ; not only because if we work with Him and suffer with Him in this Life, He will be able to heap rewards on us for so doing in the next life, but because we shall thus " fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ in our flesh for His body, which is the Church." (Col. ch. i.). When the disciples of John reproached our Lord because His disciples did not fast, His all-sufficient answer was, " Can the children of the bridegroom fast as long as the bridegroom is with them ? " They were to await His departure and then, enlightened by the Paraclete whom He was to send to them, their fasts would be as " new wine," which none but the foolish or ignorant would put into the " old bottles " of Jewish traditional observances. What is this " new wine " but the spirit of love and joy in sacrifice which animated

all who came in contact with Him of Whom the Scripture said He was the most beautiful of the children of men, and again that " He is our friend " ?

The children of Hagar, born in the bondage of the Old Law, submitted grudgingly to the Mosaic ordinances, but the children of the freeborn enjoying " the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free," were to look upon the laws of the Church founded by Christ and one with Him, whether they regard prayer or fasting in the light of a privilege.

We see the first glimmerings of this glorious light—the light of the gospels—in many of the narratives related in them. Our Saviour calls Zacheus down from the tree in which he had stationed himself, and no sooner had Jesus crossed the threshold, than the scales fell from the publican's eyes, and he sees his past life in the light of grace ; and repenting, he cries out : " Half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have wronged any man of anything, I restore him four-fold." Magdalen's repentance showed itself not only in tears of anguish, but in the precious ointment which she poured wastefully, as the world would say—and as Judas said—over her Saviour's head ; and it was for this act of love, that He foretold that " wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that which she hath done, shall be told for a memorial of her."

Prayer, fasting and almsdeeds are the God-appointed means by which the soul, touched by divine grace, seeks to make amends for her past infidelities and draw down God's blessings. A special blessing is attached to those which are done in obedience to the Church's commands. The Church, as a tender mother condescending to the weakness of her children, asks but the minimum of what is required from them. If therefore we make pretexts to get dispensed from her laws, we are but piling up the debt we owe to the divine justice which will have to be satisfied in the prison-house of purgatory, whence we shall not get out " till we have paid the last farthing."

With Septuagesima Sunday, the Church takes leave of the joyous spirit with which she hailed the coming of the Redeemer; and to note the approach of the penitential time of Lent, she vests her priests in purple, not only on Sundays but upon all the days of the week excepting on the feasts of saints. The *Gloria in Excelsis* is no longer sung on Sundays; the deacon dismisses the faithful with the words *Benedicamus Domino;* and in order to emphasize the words of Holy Writ that "Praise is unseemly in the mouth of sinners" she omits the Alleluia in Mass and at all her offices. The taking leave of the Alleluia is celebrated in antiphons in the Gothic Church of Spain and that of Germany; and in France by St. Cornelius of Compiègne as early as the ninth century. The following hymn from the French Church dates from the thirteenth century:

Alleluia dulce carmen Vox perennis gaudii Alleluia laus suavis Est choris cœlestibus, Quam canunt Dei manentes In domo per sæcula.	The sweet Alleluia-song, the word of endless joy, is the melody of heaven's choir, chanted by them that dwell for ever in the house of God.
Alleluia laeta mater Concivis Jerusalem Alleluia vox tuorum Civium gaudentium; Exsules nos flere cogunt Babylones flumina.	O joyful Mother! O Jerusalem our city! Alleluia is the language of thy happy citizens. The rivers of Babylon, where we poor exiles live, force us to weep.
Alleluia non meremur In perenne psallere; Alleluia vox reatus Cogit intermittere; Tempus instat quo peracta Lugeamus crimina.	We are unworthy to sing a ceaseless Alleluia. Our sins force us to interrupt our Alleluia. The time is at hand when it behoves us to weep our crimes.
Unde laudando precamur Te, beata Trinitas, Ut tuum nobis videre Pascha des in aethere Quo tibi laeti canamus Alleluia perpetim. Amen.	We therefore beseech Thee, whilst we praise Thee, O Blessed Trinity, that Thou grant us to come to that Easter of Heaven where we shall sing to Thee our joyful everlasting Alleluia. Amen.

The feast of St. Scholastica is kept on the 10th of February. She was a sister of St. Benedict and founded a monastery for Benedictine nuns in the neighbourhood

of Monte Cassino, where her brother used to visit her. On his last visit, knowing that her end was approaching, she pressed him to stay on, saying: "My brother, leave me not, I pray you, this night, but discourse with me till dawn, on the bliss of those who see God in Heaven." St. Benedict refused—being unwilling to break the rule through natural affection. But she, turning to her heavenly Spouse, implored the favour of Him. Instantly the sky became overcast and such a terrible storm arose that St. Benedict was constrained to do her bidding and they spent the night in heavenly conversation. Three days later, he saw St. Scholastica's soul in a vision soaring up to Heaven in the form of a white dove.

The feast of St. Mathias is celebrated on the 25th of February. We learn from the words of St. Peter recorded in the Acts of the Apostles that he was one of the first of Christ's followers to accept the divine invitation to leave all and follow Him. He was therefore a witness of all of his divine Master's miracles and was present with the rest of the seventy-two disciples at our Lord's Ascension into Heaven. It was doubtless of him that the inspired prophet spoke when he prophesied that "another should take the bishopric" forfeited by the traitor Judas. Accordingly when the apostles were gathered together in one place, and St. Peter rising up in the midst of the brethren told them "that of these men who have accompanied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus came in and went out among us beginning from the baptism of John until the day wherein He was taken up from us, one of these must be made a witness with us of His Resurrection," then two disciples having been appointed, "the lot fell upon Mathias and he was numbered with the eleven apostles." Little is known of his subsequent career except the tradition that he evangelized Cappadocia and the country bordering on the Caspian Sea and that his apostolic labours were crowned with a glorious martyrdom.

The feast of St. Brigid, patroness of Ireland, whose

purity and beauty of soul and body gave her such a remarkable resemblance to the B. Virgin that she was given the name of *Altera Maria*, is kept on the 27th of February.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

The Church, in order to recall to her children's mind that death, with all its fearful consequences, is the result of sin, gives the history of the fall of man in Genesis (ch. iii.) in the matins of Septuagesima Sunday. She takes her lesson from the same Book every day in the succeeding week. The station for this Sunday is held in St. Lorenzo outside the walls.

The introit for the Mass again recalls the thought of death as the punishment of sin whilst it encourages the repentant sinner to put his confidence in God's mercy :

> " The groans of death surrounded me, and the sorrows of hell encompassed me, and in my affliction I called upon the Lord and He heard my voice from His holy Temple."
>
> Ps. I will love thee, O Lord my strength ; the Lord is my firmament, my refuge and my deliverer.

In the epistle, St. Paul puts before us in vivid terms one of the many causes for which we should practise penance (Cor. ch. ix.) :

> " Brethren, know you not that they that run in the race, all run indeed but one receiveth a prize ? So run that you may obtain ; everyone that striveth for the mastery, refraineth himself from all things ; and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible prize, but we an incorruptible one. I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty, I so fight, not as one beating the air ; but I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection, lest perhaps when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

This is a question which we have, each of us, to put to ourselves as we approach the holy season of Lent. Do I refrain myself from all things? Can I honestly say I refrain from anything with a view to an incorruptible crown? Do I not shrink from chastising my body, or even of curtailing my pleasures, with the object of doing penance for my sins? Is not the answer to such questionings that the "spirit is willing but the flesh is weak?" Heaven is a long way off, the world—all created things which tempt us away from God—so near and so pressing that we forget Him in His gifts. There is only one way of withstanding such temptations, and the Apostle gives it us. He says the charity of Christ urgeth us. Love alone is a sufficiently strong motive for such sacrifices: love and gratitude to our blessed Redeemer. If we love sincerely, heartily, no sacrifice will seem too great for us to make for love of Him; for love leads to sacrifice, and we can measure its depth by their greatness.

The gospel of this Sunday is taken from the parable of the householder recorded by St. Matthew (ch. xx.). The early labourers typified the Jews under the Old Law and the labourers of the eleventh hour the Gentiles who, though they had not borne the burden of the day and the heats, were, through the merits of Christ, to enjoy the fruits of His Redemption. But it bears also another interpretation. As we are told, "the Spirit of God breatheth where it listeth"; the same divine Spirit treats no two souls alike. Some are called in the morning of their lives to work in the Master's vineyard. Others only attain to the knowledge of truth and of all that is entailed in a call to serve and to follow Him late in life: but to all who work for Him and die in His service, He will give what He gave to the first-comers: That is He Himself "will be their exceeding great reward."

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

THE station for this Sunday is held in the Basilica of St. Paul's outside the walls. The epistle is taken from that of St. Paul to the Corinthians (ch. ii.). In this outpouring of his soul to his spiritual children, the Apostle seems, with every word he uses about his watchings, his labours, his perils by land and sea, to rally them to the standard of the Cross. Thus only he understood Christ's message to man which he was bidden to deliver, and which he exemplified in his own person. It was foretold of him by the Spirit of God speaking to Ananias, that he was to be a vessel of election, "For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my sake." But such was his love for his divine Master that he saw only a source of joy in all the sacrifices he made for Him: "I am filled with comfort," he writes in the same epistle, "I exceedingly abound in joy in all our tribulation."

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

THE Church puts before her children in the office of this day the example of Abraham as related in the twelfth chapter of Genesis. She would have us learn from the great patriarch that there are no sacrifices we should not be prepared to make when God requires them of us.

The station for this Sunday is held at St. Peter's on the Vatican.

The epistle for the day is taken from St. Paul's great exposition of the duty of charity (1 Cor. ch. xiii.). With what words of fire it begins! "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

And then what a definition of this divine virtue, "Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up. Is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in inquity, but rejoiceth with the truth. Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." In that admirable summing up, we are made to realize that where perfect charity exists, there also is every virtue in its perfection, "peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity," truth, and—above all—humility.

The gospel from St. Luke (ch. xviii.) in which our Lord foretells His going up to Jerusalem to be followed by His Blessed Passion, His Death and Resurrection. The disciples, ignorant as they still were of the whole bearing of Christ's mission on earth, understood none of these things. Holy Church, divinely enlightened, places these words on the threshold, as it were, of Lent, to show us that it is by following humbly in Christ's footsteps, uniting our little penances and sacrifices with His great Sacrifice, that we shall prepare ourselves to enter with Him into Paschal joys.

Shrove-Tide—the two days preceding Ash Wednesday, otherwise known as the Carnival*—were in Catholic countries given up to excesses which the Church deplored, but was unable to stop. Hence, special devotions, such as the Quarant'ore, have been instituted with the object of making reparation for the sins of mankind and imploring the conversion of sinners. The devotion of the Quarant'ore, encouraged by St. Charles Borromeo, and approved by the Holy See, has of late years spread over the whole world.

* From two Latin words: *carne vale*, farewell meat.

LENT

We have the authority of St. Jerome, whose life was only separated by three centuries from Apostolic times, and of other great Doctors of the Church such as St. Leo the Great, St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. Isidore of Seville, for the belief that Lent was instituted by the Apostles, though not at first in a uniform manner. St. Basil, St. John Chrysostom, and others have drawn our attention to the fact that abstinence was the special test put to Adam and Eve to try their obedience in the garden of Eden; and the punishment which came upon them and their descendants was a result of their not keeping it. Fasting consisted, in the first place, of abstinence from flesh meat because it is a food given to man by God out of condescension for his weakness. It is not essential to him and life can be maintained without it. Wine was also forbidden during Lent in the early ages of the Church for the same reason. The Jews, under the Old Law, only took one meal in the day, and that one after sunset, and the Christians adhered up to about the 9th century to the same rule. In the 10th century, we know by the writings of Ratherius, Bishop of Verona, that the faithful were permitted to break their fast at the hour of none: namely, at three o'clock. It was also customary for the Religious Orders to anticipate the hour of vespers—reciting them directly after none, in order to comply with the rule that no food should be taken before vespers. In the 14th century, the practice of taking this meal at midday became universal, and with it that of taking a light meal in the evening called a collation.* By degrees also, a relaxation of the severity of the fasts

* The word collation is taken from the Latin *collatio* signifying conference; the celebrated conferences of Cassian being read in Benedictine monasteries whilst the monks partook of a slight evening repast.

as regards what is known as *lacticinia*, that is milk, eggs and cheese, all of which were forbidden in the early ages, became more and more general. In the 18th century, the relaxation of the rules of fasting was so universal that Benedict XIV. issued an Encyclical to the bishops of the Church expressing his grief at the decay of fervour in the faithful, and deprecating indiscreet and unnecessary dispensations. His warning is both eloquent and convincing. "The observance of Lent is the very badge of the Christian warfare. By it we prove ourselves not to be enemies of the Cross of Christ. By it we avert the scourges of divine justice. By it we gain strength against the powers of darkness. Should mankind grow remiss in their observance of Lent, it would be detrimental to God's glory, a disgrace to the Catholic religion, and a danger to Christian souls. Neither can it be doubted but that such negligence would become the source of misery to the world, of public calamity and of private woe."

Do we not witness a confirmation of these words in the ever-increasing spirit of immortification and general effeminacy of character of the present day, which are leading (as Dom Guéranger remarks in commenting on them) to frightful social disorders and an upheaval against the laws of God and man?

Another most beneficent rule prevailed in the Ages of Faith which forbade fighting in times of fasting and prayer. The discipline of the Latin Church in the 9th century enforced everywhere the suspension of war during the whole of Lent. The instructions of Pope St. Nicholas I. to the Bulgarians recommend the same observance; and we learn from a letter of St. Gregory VII. to the Abbot of Monte Cassino that it was still kept up in the 11th century. William of Malmesbury, in the 12th century, relates that when the Empress Matilda was contesting the right of succession to the throne against Stephen, Count of Boulogne, the two armies stood facing each other during the

whole of Lent, an armistice being proclaimed between the rival forces. This was in the year 1143.* In the time of the Crusades also we find Pope Urban II. using his authority to extend what was called the Truce of God throughout the time of Lent. Thus the Church, though she was unable, even in the height of her power, to master the passions of men and subdue them to the Christian ideal of peace and goodwill, yet successfully strove to restrain them for a time in preparation for the great Sacrifice to be commemorated on Good Friday.

We read in the Scriptures that after Christ had been baptized, "He was led by the Spirit into the desert." Hence the origin in Catholic countries of avoiding places of amusement, balls, and theatres during the holy season of Lent. The Church does not so much forbid them as she discourages them as unworthy of those who are seeking to take Jesus Christ for their model, and who desire to be counted amongst His followers. To hear the voice of God, to become converted to Him "from the heart" (as the Psalmist says), we must avoid the dissipation of soul such gatherings entail. "Behold, I will allure her," saith the Lord, "and will lead her into the wilderness and there I will speak to her heart."

The time of Lent had two special offices and significations in primitive times. One was that penitents who had done public penance for their sins on Ash Wednesday were, during that space of forty days, excluded from Communion with the faithful. They were then readmitted solemnly into the Church on Maundy Thursday if the proofs of repentance they gave were of a nature to satisfy the bishop. Lent was also the time in which catechumens were instructed in the mysteries of faith in preparation for receiving the sacrament of baptism at Easter. The liturgy, in its sublime lessons from the Old and New Testaments, was in a great measure intended for their benefit.

* W. Malmesbury, Hist. nov. N. 30.

ASH WEDNESDAY

The blessing of the ashes takes place before Mass. It is not of obligation to assist at this ceremony, neither is the day one on which it is of obligation to hear Mass; but the Christian who is in earnest about conforming his conduct to the spirit of the Gospel will do both, unless incapacitated from doing so. In the prayers and blessing of the ashes, the Church has two intentions: one to remind man of the shortness of life, that he came from dust and will ere long return to it; and the second that in assuming the garb of penitence, he may be moved to an inward repentance of his sins. Let us, therefore, when performing this outward act of humiliation, humble our hearts before God and join with the priest in saying, "O Almighty and Eternal God Who forgavest the Ninevites when they did penance in sackcloth and ashes, mercifully grant us so to imitate their penance that we may obtain pardon for our sins." The lesson at Mass is taken from the Book of Joel (ch. ii.).

> Thus saith the Lord, "Be converted to me with all your heart, in fasting, in weeping and in mourning, and rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, patient and rich in mercy and ready to repent of the evil. Who knoweth but He will return and forgive and leave a blessing behind Him; sacrifice and oblation to the Lord your God."

The gospel is taken from that of St. Matthew (ch. vi.), in which Jesus explains to His disciples the manner in which they should fast in order to gain an eternal reward. In the first place, it should not be like that

of "the hypocrites, sad." God, we are told, "loves a cheerful giver," and we lose much of our merit if we grumble over our Lenten fare and complain of its hardships. Another thought should strike us on meditating upon the gospel of the day. To the Jews, to be known as rigorous keepers of the law, was a source of honour in the eyes of men. In these days it is the reverse. It requires courage to keep days of abstinence in the presence of scoffers. But our Lord's advice serves equally in both cases. We are to practise in our fasting, as in all our actions, purity of intention; that is we should look to Him only, be desirous only of pleasing Him, and treat with indifference men's praise or blame; for thus only shall we be rewarded by Him. There are many instances of people being converted through the example of Catholics professing openly their faith by observing Fridays and days of abstinence. An infidel, even, may say to himself: There must be something in a religion for which people are willing to make sacrifices which cost them a good deal. If out of human respect we drop distinctively Catholic tenets, such as regard prayer or fasting, do we not run a risk of hearing at the last day those terrible words: "I say to you whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God; but he that shall deny me before men shall be denied before the angels of God"?

The station in Rome for the first Sunday in Lent is the patriarchal basilica of St. John Lateran. The introit, gradual and tract and Communion prayers are all taken from the 90th psalm, holy Church wishing to show that all her aspirations for her children during this season are embodied in their words.

"He shall say to the Lord: Thou art my protector and my refuge.
My God, in him I will trust.
For he hath delivered me from the snare of the hunter,
And from the sharp word.
He will overshadow thee with his shoulders,
And under His wings thou shalt trust.

His truth shall compass thee with a shield,
Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night,
Of the arrow that flieth in the day.
A thousand shall fall at thy side
And ten thousand at thy right hand,
But it shall not come nigh to thee.
For he hath given his angels charge over thee
To keep thee in all thy ways.
In their hands they shall bear thee up,
Lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.
Thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk,
And thou shalt trample under foot the lion and the dragon.
Because he hath hoped in me, I will deliver him.
I will protect him because he hath known my name.
He shall call upon me and I will hear him.
I am with him in tribulation.
I will deliver him and will glorify him.
I will fill him with length of days, and I will show him my salvation."

The epistle for the First Sunday in Lent is taken from St. Paul's to the Corinthians (II. Cor. ch. vi.), in which he exhorts us that we "receive not the grace of God in vain," and reminds us that, "Now is the acceptable time, behold, now is the day of salvation." There is nothing that moves God to take compassion on us and pour out His most abundant graces on us, more than for Him to see in us a true spirit of penance. This spirit must be rooted in the heart; that is in love of God and sorrow for having offended Him. It must find outward expression in works of mortification from a firm faith in God and the ordinances of the Church founded by Him. And lastly it must be supported by divine hope, which trusts in God and the promises made by Him.

The gospel which is according to St. Matthew (ch. iv.) relates how "Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil." The three temptations Satan put to our divine Saviour are those by which he seeks to tempt and deceive all mankind: they are those of the flesh, of pride and of covetousness. The devil is ever tempting us with delusive visions of sensual enjoyment, power and riches. But (as the Scripture tells us) he is a liar from the beginning, for he has no power of giving them to us, and, were he able, they would bring us no true happiness in this life and be the cause of our eternal ruin.

Unlike any other period of the liturgical year, each day in Lent has a proper Mass. In the epistle, the Church puts before us a lesson taken from the Old Testament, and in the gospels, some portion of the history of our Saviour—many of which bear especially on our duties at this season.

The gospel for the first Monday in Lent is taken from that of St. Matthew (ch. xxv.) on the Last Judgment, in which our Lord sets before us, in terms so precise that no believer can ignore or slur them over, that we are to see Him in every one of our neighbours without exception : in the beggar in the street, in the outcast, in the stranger, and that He will take as done for Him what we do for them.

In the gospel for the first Tuesday (Matt. ch. xxi.) we read how our Lord, moved with indignation at the profanation of the Temple, turned out the money-lenders and those that sold doves, saying : "It is written : My house shall be called the House of Prayer and you have made it the den of thieves." From these two great teachings, coming from the divine lips of our blessed Lord Himself, the Church would have us learn that we must join almsdeeds to prayer and fasting, if we would draw down God's blessing on us in this holy season. "Prayer is good with fasting and alms, more than to lay up treasures of gold ; for alms delivereth from death and the same is that which purgeth away sins and maketh to find mercy and life everlasting" (Tob. ch. xii.). More than ever does holy Church exhort all Christians to assist at Mass daily, and if they are prevented by ill-health or insurmountable impediments from doing so, to assist at least in spirit, and give some time to meditation on the passages of Scripture and other prayers contained in them. In these lessons from the Old Testament, she puts before us the trials, the temptations, the triumphs, of the great seers and patriarchs of the Old Law for our encouragement and instruction. And in the gospels, she shows us our divine Saviour going about doing good,

healing the sick and instructing all men to justice, and His rejection by the Rulers and High Priests, culminating in the Sacrifice on Mount Calvary.

The words our Lord uses about prayer are so strong that we cannot do better than give a little time to consider them. He says : " We ought always to pray and not to faint," or lose heart. How are we to do this ? We are certainly not intended by these words to spend all day on our knees. It is the attitude of the heart that God looks to, not that of the body. If in the morning, we make a fervent offering of our actions to Him and renew it as often as we can during the course of the day, referring by a direct intention all we do to His honour and glory, we are making a most acceptable prayer. To prayer we may join good works that cost us something in time, inclination, or money. St. Augustine tells us, " Every work which is done that we may cleave to God in holy union, is a true sacrifice."

In these three practices of prayer, fasting and almsdeeds, the Church sees a cure for the evils under which all humanity groans. We have all sinned ; we must all do penance. If our constitutions are no longer capable of bearing the prolonged fasts of our forefathers, we can make up for the want of them in other ways, above all by abundant almsgiving. And this we are all bound to do according to our means. Christ praised the widow's offering of two mites because of the sacrifice it entailed ; for sacrifice connotes love and love gives value above all else to our actions. But the rich man who gives largely out of his abundance from a pure motive, not to be seen by men but to please God and accomplish His holy Will, will be largely rewarded, even a hundredfold in this life, and in the next with a reward that will last for ever.

The three Ember days, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, are kept in the first week in Lent. The lessons for Mass on Ember Wednesday are taken from the Book of Exodus and that of Kings. In the first of which we read how Moses " went up into the mountain and he was

there forty days and forty nights." And in Kings (III. ch. xix) how Elias having been brought food by the Angel was told by him, " Arise and eat, for thou hast yet a great way to go. And he arose and ate and drank and walked in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights unto Horeb, the mount of God."

The Church sees a type in these days spent in expectation and preparation of Moses and Elias—two great servants of God—in the Old Law before entering into God's presence, of the Christian's preparation for the great Paschal Feast, and for the revelation of God's love for man in the institution of the holy Eucharist which preceded it.

In the gospel (Matt. ch. xii.) we read how a message came to our Lord after He had concluded one of His divine discourses, that His mother and brethren were seeking Him : " And stretching forth his hand towards his disciples, he said, Behold my Mother and my brethren, for whosoever shall do the will of my Father that is in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother." We have a complete scheme of life in these few words. Every morning as we go to work—facing the day's duties, whether as man, woman, or child, married or unmarried, master or servant—we should keep this thought before us : " Is what I am doing what God asks of *me ?* Am I doing it as He wishes it to be done, and because He wishes me to do it ? " And again in the evening, I should question myself how or wherein I have failed ; the occasions when I have manifestly preferred my own interests to my neighbour's, in spite of the divine commandment to love my neighbour as myself ; the occasions, few or many, in which I have transgressed His known wishes, such for instance as in siding with the world which is His enemy, or giving bad example to one of His little ones. By the answer my conscience makes to such questionings, I shall know whether, when I come to die, Christ will welcome me as one of His own, His mother, His brother, or His sister.

or whether He will pronounce that awful sentence upon me, "*Nescio vos*," I know you not.

The station for the Second Sunday of Lent is held in the Church of St. Mary in Domenica. The epistle is that of St. Paul to the Thessalonians (I. Thess. ch. xvii.). These striking words occur in it: "This is the will of God, your sanctification." We should consider these words attentively, for in them we may see a key to the enigma of God's dealings with man. For this reason, He sends us crosses; for this He withdraws pleasures—happiness even, which, in His divine wisdom He sees would be dangerous to our souls. It could not be otherwise. God's aim in creating the soul of man, is His own honour and glory; and this is attained in proportion to man's fidelity to grace and correspondence with it. Thus He has made our interests identical with His; for our glory and happiness hereafter will be in proportion to the degree of sanctity to which we have attained in this world.

The gospel, which is from that of St. Matthew (ch. xvii.), gives a description of our Lord's Transfiguration. On this one occasion only did Christ show Himself to His chosen disciples in His glory. They knew Him indeed as a wonder-worker, as a tender Friend, as the Messiah that was to come. But on this occasion, Jesus, in order to strengthen their faith in the trials which awaited them, when they were to see Him at the mercy of His enemies, "led as a sheep to the slaughter," "a worm and no man," allowed them a passing glimpse of His splendour. "And His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as snow." No wonder that Peter cried out, "Lord, it is good for us to be here," but the gospel goes on to say: "He knew not what he was saying."

It is with the same view, that of strengthening our faith, that the Church puts it before her children. We are also passing through a time of trial, and the mother of our souls, divinely enlightened, is asking sacrifices of

us hard to human nature ; for are not fasting, prayer, and, perhaps even more, almsgiving—when it is to the extent of making the body suffer and the pride smart—all opposed to the old Adam which is in us ? So she invites us to go up Mount Thabor with Peter and James and John, and contemplate Christ for a little while in His glory—remembering that it is only by sharing His cross that we shall share His crown, and that, " what is small and light of our tribulation worketh for us hereafter a great weight of glory."

The gospel which holy Church gives us at Mass on Wednesday in the second week of Lent, is intended to emphasize a fact that we are so prone to forget : that nearness to our Lord entails, in this life, a share of His sufferings. The mother of the sons of Zebedee asked for a high place for her sons in God's kingdom, and before answering her, Christ asks of them : " Can you drink of the chalice that I shall drink ? " They answered, " We can ; " but, like Peter, they knew not what they were saying. They found out soon in the betrayal, in their flight—for it is said, " they all likewise fled "—in the Passion, and dereliction which John witnessed at the foot of the Cross, what it was to drink the chalice with their divine Master. But it was only when the Paraclete had come and taught them all truth that they understood fully God's designs, and at what cost to flesh and blood it was necessary for greatness such as theirs to be attained.

The epistle for Thursday in the second week in Lent, contains a very beautiful lesson on confidence in God taken from the prophet Jeremias (ch. xvii.).

> Thus saith the Lord : " Cursed be the man that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like tamarisk in the desert. . . . Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord, and the Lord shall be his confidence. And he shall be as a tree that is

> planted by the waters and spreadeth out its roots towards moisture, and it shall not fear when the heat cometh, and the leaf thereof shall be green, and in the time of drought it shall not be solicitous, neither shall it cease at any time to bring forth fruit."

We see in the inspired words of the prophet how greatly God rewards our confidence in Him. And what a practical lesson we should learn from them! In the lives of all men there are moments of lively anxiety, whether it be on account of failure—or threatened failure—of health; or of fortune, or of happiness; or of fears for home or country; or because the future of those they love is in danger. Then comes the great test of faith: to whom do they turn instinctively in their troubles? Do they ransack the country for cures and remedies when they are ill, and turn to God as an afterthought when all else has failed, or is their first thought of Him Who alone has power over life and death? How striking are those simple words in Holy Writ telling of the death of Asa: that "he fell sick of a great pain, yet in his illness, he did not seek the Lord but rather trusted in the skill of his physicians. And he slept with his fathers." (II. Para. ch. xvi.). A merciful Providence sends us trials in order to detach us from the things of this life, and to cause us to take refuge in the "everlasting Arms." Jeremias compares "the man who trusteth in man" to the tamarisk in the desert, the most barren of shrubs, which bears neither flower nor fruit; and the man whose confidence is in God to the fruitful tree who "shall not fear when the heat cometh," that is when tried in the furnace of tribulation. By these words he would give us to understand that these trials will turn to great profit to the soul, so that it shall never cease at any time to bear fruit.

We know from the revelation of the saints, as well as from the testimony of the Scriptures, that God can refuse

nothing to the soul that places confidence in Him. He revealed to St. Gertrude that, "When a soul places all her trust in Me alone, believing without any doubt that I can and will succour her, this virtue is so pleasing to Me, that it pierces My Heart and does me a kind of violence; for if on the one hand I would defer the answer from My delight to see her trust in Me and the merit she acquires thereby, on the other, I fain would help her because of her confidence in My goodness."

The station for the Third Sunday in Lent is at the basilica of St. Lawrence. The epistle is taken from that of St. Paul to the Ephesians (ch. v.). It was addressed to the converts of Ephesus, and therefore it bore a special message to the catechumens who in primitive times were being instructed in these days in Christian doctrines. The apostle reminds the faithful that they "were heretofore darkness but now light in the Lord," with the result that they should show forth this light in their conduct, and "walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us and hath delivered Himself for us." What it is to "walk in love" is made very clear in the sentence which follows. It is to avoid uncharitable conversation, and all language which offends against the angelical virtue, and scurrility, "as becometh saints." We are all saints in the sense in which St. Paul uses these words. For are we not all trying to save our souls and hoping to spend our eternity in heaven? In the matter of salvation there is no half-way house. We shall be either in the company of the lost in hell, or with the saints and angels of God in Heaven. And there is no greater test for our fitness for Heaven than our conversation, for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

In the gospel for this Sunday (Luke ch. xi.) we read how a woman out of the crowd who were listening to Him Who spoke as never man spoke, lifting up her voice said: "Blessed is the womb that bore thee and the breasts that gave thee suck. But He said, Yea, rather blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it."

It was to the greatness of her sancity that the Virgin Mother owed her pre-eminence above all angels and men; and we shall be blessed in God's sight in proportion to the manner in which we imitate her example.

In the Friday of the third week in Lent, we shall find much food for meditation in the gospel, which is taken from that of St. John (ch. iv.). We read how our Lord, "coming to a city of Samaria which is called Sichar, was weary and sat by the well which is called Jacob's." He was seeking the lost sheep of the children of Israel. And we may apply the words of the gospel, each one of us, to ourselves.

Quaerens me sedisti lassus.

He seeks man no longer as He did on earth on the sun-baked plains of Galilee or Samaria; nevertheless, He ceases not to search him out from his misery, and degradation, and ignorance, as He did the Samaritan woman, in order to offer him those fountains of divine grace, the sacraments: the fountains of which He spoke when He said, "The water I will give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into life everlasting."

The Fourth Sunday of Lent, or Mid-Lent Sunday, goes also by the name of Lætare Sunday, from the first word of the introit in which Jerusalem is bidden to rejoice:

> "Rejoice, O Jerusalem, and meet together all you who love her; rejoice exceedingly, you who have been in sorrow, that you may leap for joy and be satiated with comfort from her breasts."
>
> Ps. "I rejoiced at the things that were said to me: we shall go into the house of the Lord."

Lent is now half finished. The "seventy years' captivity" will soon be over. Yet a little while, and the captives will return to Jerusalem. The Church,

like a true mother, rejoices with her children ; and this note of joy and triumph is very apparent in both the epistle and gospel of the Sunday. The first is taken from that of St. Paul to the Galatians (ch. iv.). What a trumpet note of exultation resounds in the words of the Apostle, when, after explaining that Abraham had two sons, one by a bond-woman and one by a free woman, he says, "but that Jerusalem which is above is free, which is our mother. . . . But what saith the Scripture ? Cast out the bond-woman and her son, for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond-woman but of the free, by the freedom wherewith Christ hath made us free." The joy of the people of Israel in their holy city was but a shadow of the joy and happiness of the Christian who realizes what the Son of God has done for him : how by His death He has loosened the bands of sin, taken away the bitterness of death, and opened the kingdom of heaven for him and all believers.

The gospel in which we read of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, is according to St. John (ch. vi.). In this miracle of our Lord we have a perfect type of the holy Eucharist. Truly this is the table spread for God's children in the wilderness of which the Prophet spoke ; and the food put before them has in it all that is delicious, and sweetness to every taste. And if these wonders of God's goodness do not move us to rejoice, is it not because our religion is not what it ought to be and what Christ meant it to be, the joy and consolation of every day of our lives ? Possibly we may find that this failure comes from a quite unexpected cause : that it is the result of the unmortified lives we lead. Joy is the special reward of mortified lives. Saints, as we read in their lives, abound in spiritual joy in spite of their austerities—or rather we should say in consequence of them. And so in their measure and degree do members of religious orders. Half the

troubles of life come from the too great attachment to creatures, that is, to all that is not God, and from anxiety about the future as regards pleasures, comforts, worldly success and similar things. A spirit of penance which enables us to bear the minor trials of life with a *Fiat*, or still better, with a *Deo Gratias*, causes us to rise above and superior to them. We breathe a supernatural atmosphere in which such troubles have no power to weigh us down, and we thus attain to the freedom with which Christ has made us free.

To denote further that this day should be given to rejoicing, the Church clothes her ministers in rose-coloured vestments, and the deacon resumes his dalmatic and the subdeacon his tunic. The organ, which, wherever it is possible to dispense with it, is hushed throughout Lent, is once more heard in the churches. It is on Mid-Lent Sunday also that the beautiful ceremony which dates from medieval times takes place in Rome, of blessing the Golden Rose. In the ages of faith, it was the custom of the Pope, after having blessed it, to proceed on horseback, Rose in hand, accompanied by a great number of Cardinals from the Lateran, to the church of the station, returning, in the same way, in state. If any prince or member of a royal family was present, he was privileged to hold the Pope's stirrup and assist him to dismount, and it was customary for him to receive the Golden Rose in return for this act of homage. The procession has long been given up, but the Rose is still blessed and sent as a mark of the Pope's regard to a Royal personage, Queen or Princess, or a city, or church.

The feast of SS. Perpetua and Felicitas, martyrs, is kept on the 6th of March. They have the signal honour of being daily mentioned in holy Mass. St. Perpetua wrote the history of her own apprehension and trial, leaving the account of her death to be concluded by her fellow-Christians. This narrative is

given in the Breviary lessons of the day. St. John Chrysostom writes in great admiration of these glorious martyrs: "For the frailer the instrument, the greater is the grace, the brighter the trophy, the grander the victory; because the devil is conquered by *her* by whom *he* once conquered us. He conquered by means of a woman and a woman now conquers him. She that was once his weapon, now brave and invincible, is his destroyer. The first one sinned and died; this one died rather than sin." Perpetua was a married woman and belonged to a noble family. Felicitas was of humble birth. She also was a wife, and was about to become a mother when she was cast into prison for the crime of being a Christian; whilst there she was seized with the pangs of child-birth, and the gaoler, hearing her groans, said, "If thou complainest of thy present pains, how wilt thou be able to endure the tortures from the fangs of wild beasts which await thee?" She answered, "These pains from which I suffer are my own; but when I then suffer, there will be Another in me Who will suffer for me, because I shall be suffering for Him."

The Feast of St. Thomas of Aquin, to whom the Church has given the title of the Angelical Doctor from the celestial nature of his teaching and the purity of his life, is celebrated on the 7th of March. His learning was great and his piety still greater, and he was accustomed to say that what he taught he had learnt at the foot of the Crucifix. On one occasion, when he was kneeling there, he heard a voice saying, "Thomas! well hast thou written of Me. What reward wouldst thou have Me give thee?" "No other than Thyself, O Lord," was his answer. A short time before he died, he fell into a trance or ecstasy which lasted several hours. When he came out of it his brethren crowded round him to know what divine revelation he had received. For a long time he would make no answer. Then the answer came, "All I have

said is nothing in comparison to what I have seen." And then when they urged him still further, he answered, "As we have heard so have we seen in the city of the Lord of Hosts, in the city of our God." Soon after he expired: A.D. 1274.

The feast of St. Frances of Rome is celebrated on the 9th of March. In her we see the ideal wife and mother. Though she had dedicated herself to God from her earliest years, at the bidding of her parents, backed by that of her confessor—who told her he saw no indication that she was called to a religious life—she married a member of a rich and noble family, called Lorenzo Ponziano. She made him a devoted and exemplary wife and bore him three children. Though prayer was the very breath of her nostrils, it never interfered with the duties of her state of life, and it is related of her that on one occasion when she was saying her Office, she was four times interrupted, and that every time she rose without a murmur to do what was asked of her. On returning to her prayers on the fourth occasion, she saw the words of the psalm written in letters of gold. In the Sack of Rome in 1413, her husband was banished, her eldest son taken as a hostage, their property confiscated, and their house wrecked, and robbed of all its treasures. As the roof was still standing, she turned it into a hospital, and from that time she gave herself up entirely to the service of the poor. As she was thus bereft of all things, she maintained her good works by begging. After peace was restored, she gained her husband's consent to continuing her life of active charity—one which was so pleasing to God that He blessed it with many miracles. She was consoled with the visible presence of her guardian angel from her thirtieth year to the end of her life. She founded the Order of the Oblates of the Tor di Specchi, and joined the community as its superior on the death of her husband. Her holy life terminated at the age of fifty-six in 1440.

St. Gregory the Great's feast is kept on March 12th. He was a great Pope, and a great missionary, and the Church honours him as one of her four great Doctors. He was instrumental in the conversion of England by sending St. Augustine and his monks to spread the light of the Faith there. One of his sayings is recorded, "In very truth, no sacrifice is more pleasing to God than zeal for souls." He died in 604, worn out by his toils and his austerities.

The feast of St. Patrick the Apostle of Ireland is kept on the 17th of this month. The exact date of his birth is unknown, but it is supposed that it was in the end of the fifth century. He was of Roman parentage; and in the lessons of the Breviary we read that "he was taken captive by the barbarians as a boy," and was remarkable for his piety from his earliest youth. He used to rise at the dawn of day in order to offer up his prayers to God. After his release, he went to Brittany and was ordained priest. He travelled all over Gaul and Italy, preaching and making converts to the faith. Pope St. Celestine (A.D. 422-432) made him a bishop and sent him to convert Ireland. His success there was nothing short of miraculous. He found the Celtic tribes pagan, and before his death the greater majority had become Christians. His labours were incessant and were blessed with many miracles. He had the gift of prophecy and saw visions. Besides "his daily solicitude for the churches" he kept up an unceasing prayer. It is said that he was wont to recite every day the whole Psalter, together with the Canticles and hymns, and two hundred prayers; that he knelt down three hundred times to adore God, and that each of the canonical hours he made three hundred signs of the Cross. He divided the night into three parts; the first was spent in the recitation of a hundred Psalms during which he genuflected two hundred times; the second was spent in reciting the remaining fifty, which he did standing in cold water, his eyes and hands

lifted up to Heaven. The third he gave to a little sleep, which he took lying down on a bare stone. He imitated the example of the apostles by the practice of manual labour, and was distinguished by his profound humility as well as by every virtue. He lived to extreme old age and was buried at Down (A.D. 549).

On the 19th of March, the Church celebrates the feast of St. Joseph, the spouse of the Blessed Mother and foster-father of the Son of God. The gospels of St. Matthew and of St. Luke give us the history of his descent from David, showing that he, and consequently Mary—for they were cousins—were of royal blood, in order that the prophecy should be fulfilled, with respect to her that "there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him" (Is. xi. 1). To appreciate the greatness of this mighty servant of God, we must realize the dignity of the divinely-appointed offices which he filled. He was the spouse of Mary, the guardian of her who was called by God to be the Mother of His Son. He was to be the foster-father of the Incarnate Word during His helpless infancy and early years. The Mother and Son were to depend upon him for their safety in the flight to Egypt; he guided their daily steps. They depended upon him for their sustenance and support, and he gained their daily bread by the sweat of his brow. The Scripture sums all his virtues up in the comprehensive words, "he was a just man." St. Joseph did not live to witness the public life of the Messiah. Tradition pictures him as dying in the arms of Jesus; fit reward for him who had so often carried the Son of God who was also Son of Mary in His childhood—with Mary his spotless wife watching over him, and the angels ready to bear his soul to the peaceful nether world where he was to await with the other patriarchs the coming of Christ the Conqueror.

St. Benedict's feast is kept on the 21st of March.

St. Gregory the Great says of him that " he was filled with the spirit of all the just." The liturgical lessons relate that he was born in Nursia, of a noble family (*circa* 480). He was educated in Rome but, horrified by the licentious lives led by his fellow-students, he fled to the mountainous country about Subiaco, and lived there for three years in a cave. He was fed by a holy monk named Romanus, who also gave him the habit. After a time, the fame of his sanctity spread abroad, and many came to place themselves under his guidance. Amongst these were SS. Maurus and Placid. He founded twelve monasteries, the last being the great abbey of Monte Cassino, where he wrote what is known as pre-eminently the Holy Rule, and where he also ended his days. He worked many stupendous miracles, raising on one occasion a child to life. His prayer was almost incessant. When he approached his end, he foretold the day of his death to his brethren, and ordered them to dig a grave at the place which he pointed out to them. When the day came, " he desired to be carried to the church ; and there, having received the holy Eucharist, his eyes raised in prayer to Heaven, and supported by his brethren, he breathed forth his soul to God." Some of his monks saw his soul, clothed in beauty, ascending to Heaven, and a voice said, " This is the way whereby Benedict, the beloved of the Lord, ascended to Heaven." Many profound maxims of the spiritual life come to us from him. Humility and a laborious life were among the practices specially inculcated by him. " Indolence is the enemy of the soul," was one of his sayings.

St. Gabriel, whose feast is kept on the 24th of March, has been given the name of the Angel of the Incarnation. His name signifies the strength of God ; and, as he told Zachary, he stands ever " before the face of God." He began his mission to man by appearing to Daniel, " the man of desires," and prophesying to him in mystic words the number of weeks which were to elapse before the

coming of "Christ the Prince" (ix. 25). To Gabriel was given the sublime mission of announcing to the Virgin Mary the greatness of the honour in store for her, and gaining her consent to the mystery of the Incarnation. The words with which Gabriel saluted Mary, "Hail, full of grace," are repeated in all parts of the world, and at all times of the day and night, in homage of the Mother of God. To this homage should we not do well to add an invocation from time to time to the "Strength of God," asking him to support us in our journey through life, and to intercede for us at the hour of death?

The feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin is celebrated on the 25th of March. On this day God fulfils His promise spoken at the moment when, through the serpent's wiles, Adam and Eve had fallen from divine grace, "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed; she shall crush thy head and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel." Deborah, when she sang her song of triumph over the enemy of God's people, "The valiant men ceased and rested in Israel until Deborah arose, a mother in Israel" (Judges ch. v.), was a type of Mary. Judith was another type of the Mother of God; the victory of Judith over Holophernes, the enemy of God and His chosen People, foreshadowing Mary's defeat of Satan and the powers of darkness. For Mary also could say, "Praise ye the Lord, our God Who hath not forsaken them that hope in Him. And by me his handmaid, He hath fulfilled His mercy which He promised to the house of Israel. . . . The Almighty God hath struck him and hath delivered him into the hands of a woman and hath slain him" (Judith, xiii., xvi.).

St. Bernard, in his homily on the gospel of this day (which is that of St. Luke, ch. i.), bids Eve "go to Mary; go, Mother, to thy daughter; let thy daughter take thy part, and free thee from thy disgrace and reconcile thee to her father. For if man fell by a woman, he is

raised by a woman!" Then, addressing Adam, he says, "In place of the woman of whom thou complainest, He gives thee another: Eve was foolish, Mary is wise; Eve was proud, Mary is humble; Eve gave thee of the tree of death, Mary will give thee of the tree of life. Eve gave thee a bitter and poisoned fruit, Mary will give thee the sweet Fruit she herself is to bring forth—the Fruit of everlasting Life." If we would enter a little more into the secrets of divine Providence, Mary's psalm of gratitude and rejoicing will help us. "He hath regarded," she cries, "the lowliness of his handmaid, for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." And again, "He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He hath put down the mighty from their seat and hath exalted the humble. He hath filled the hungry with good things and the rich He hath sent empty away."

In that treasury of beautiful thoughts, "The Revelations of Divine Love," Mother Juliana of Norwich puts before us a picture of the Virgin Mary at the time when Gabriel announced to her that she was chosen to be the mother of the Son of God. "At this time, He brought our Lady, St. Mary, to my understanding; I saw her ghostlie in bodilie likeness, a simple maiden and a meeke, young of age, a little waxen above a child in the stature as she was when she conceived. Also God shewed me in part, the wisdom and the truth of her soule; wherein I understood the reverence with which she beheld her God that is her Maker, marvailing with great reverence that He should be born of her that was a simple creature of His making. For this was her marvailing, that He that was her Maker should be born of her that was made. And this wisdom of truth, knowing the greatness of her Maker and the littleness of herselfe that is made, made her saie, full meeklie, to Gabriel: 'Lo me here, God's handmaiden.' In this sight I did understand verilie that she is more than all that God made beneath her in worthines and fullhead. For above her is nothing

that is made but the blessed manhood of Christ; as to my sight."*

The epistle of the Tuesday in the fourth week in Lent is taken from the book of Exodus (ch. xxxii.). It was, no doubt, intended primarily as a warning to the catechumens against a relapse into idolatry. But what a profound lesson does it not also convey to us on the power of fervent, persevering prayer; of the prayer of which Christ spoke when He said that it could move mountains. We see Moses pouring out his soul to God in mingled entreaties and reproaches, reminding Him of all He had done for the people of Israel and of His promises to Abraham and Isaac. And finally we are told, "And the Lord was appeased from doing the evil which He had spoken against His People."

Wednesday of the fourth week is called liturgically the Feria of the great Scrutiny, because on that day the list of the catechumens who were to be presented for baptism at Easter was closed. The station was held in Rome at the basilica of St. Paul's outside the walls. A long and solemn ceremony took place there, accompanied by many mystic rites. The Sign of the Cross was made over each one of the catechumens, and salt, previously blessed (signifying divine wisdom), placed upon their lips; after which they were admitted into the church, accompanied by their sponsors, and received the blessing of the Pontiff. This was followed by the opening prayers of Mass and an Introit and Gradual especially addressed to them, and the fourteen verses of the first chapter of St. John's Gospel. The ceremony called "The giving of the Symbol" then took place, which consisted of the catechumens in the early ages giving their adhesion to the Apostles' Creed (or Symbol) and in later days to the Nicene Creed. This was followed by an allocution by a priest, and subse-

* "Revelations of Divine Love," ch. iv.

quently by the "gift," as it was termed, of the Lord's Prayer, followed by an explanation or paraphrase on the petitions contained in it. After the gospel, which was that of the cure of the man who was born blind, the catechumens were bidden as usual to leave the Church, for they had not yet been initiated into the "discipline of the secret," and at the end of Mass they were brought back by their sponsors, and told the day on which they were to present themselves for examination on the Symbol and the other doctrines in which they had received instruction.

The gospel for Friday in the fourth week of Lent is taken from the eleventh chapter of St. John, in which we read of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. No narrative in the history of our Lord's life on earth lends itself more readily to a devout meditation and contemplation than this one.

Let us first fix our eyes in spirit on our Saviour surrounded by His disciples and receiving the message of the two sisters: "Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick." Would it not have been more natural, even more seemly, if they had said, he who loves *Thee* is sick? But no, though their faith was as yet imperfect, as we can see from Martha's misgivings later on, yet they had mastered this astounding truth that the love of this Wonder-worker, this Man sent from God, Who must have been the object of their tenderest veneration, yet loved them more deeply even than He was loved by them. This thought leads to another: how did our Lord show it? Was it not by a most tender consideration for the feelings of these friends and for all whom He came across? Nothing is more odious in man or woman than the assumption of airs of superior wisdom or birth, even when they have grounds for assuming them. May we not almost take for granted, therefore, that He, King of kings, the divine Word though He was, showed no such pretensions? He Who was purity itself could have manifested no disdain

for the converted sinner ; and we know He allowed her to rest at His feet. In His daily intercourse with those whom He treated as friends He who was the Wisdom of the Father, must have lived with them as one of themselves. Instead of exacting love from these, His creatures, the work of His hands, it would almost appear that He showed Himself beholden to them for their love, so that they were made to feel that because they loved Him, they had established a kind of claim upon His favours. All this and much more we learn from those words of perfect confidence and love, "He whom Thou lovest is sick," and they are all words which we can take to ourselves. The gospel goes on to say that after hearing of the sickness of him whom He loved, Jesus remained two days longer in the same place. We have much to learn from this. How often our Lord seems to keep us waiting before He answers our prayers ! Should we not learn from this gospel that as He loves us even as He loved Lazarus and Martha and Mary, so we must expect that He will try our patience by delays : sometimes in punishment of our delay in going to Him, or of going to Him, perhaps, as a last resource, and sometimes in order to prepare a reward for us—when our submission to the divine Will has been complete—commensurate with His love for us and with the cost at which the submission has been made.

For a third point in our meditation, let us follow Christ to Bethany. He begins His mission of charity to the bereaved family by eliciting an act of faith from Martha. Faith is a plea which carries greater weight with it than any other with God. In order that we may be heard, we must believe. "Believe," we read, "and all shall come to pass as it was foretold to you." Faith, which is a divine gift, precedes hope, because we must know Him in Whom we place our trust, and both are followed by charity ; for how could we know and trust God without loving Him ? And all three virtues are the free gift of God which no efforts on our part could

have merited, but which He will infallibly give us if we ask them of Him. There is yet another thought on which spiritual writers recommend us to dwell when meditating on this gospel. It is said when Jesus saw Mary and the Jews that were come with her, He "groaned and was troubled in spirit." And again after He had asked where the body of Lazarus had been laid, it is said: "and Jesus wept." Why did He weep, it is asked, since He knew that He was about to raise Lazarus to life again? The answer, we are told, is that our Lord shed tears not only in sympathy with Martha and Mary, but with the whole human race groaning under the punishment of death which sin had brought into the world. God, in creating man and putting him into a paradise of delight, destined him to happiness, both here and hereafter. But He left man his free will, and man made use of it to frustrate God's plans for his good. And thus Jesus weeps. He weeps with all in sorrow and anguish, and bids them to come to Him Who alone can console them. For as He alone can raise them up from the death of sin, as He did Lazarus from the death of the body, so He alone can restore peace to the heavily-burdened and the broken-hearted.

PASSION-TIDE

In the mysteries commemorated during this fortnight, the Christian soul drinks at the very fountain of Eternal life. For it is on Mount Calvary that the Lamb Who was slain before the beginning of the world celebrates His espousals with her. It was by His Passion, culminating in His death on the Cross that the Son of God blotted out the handwriting of the decree that stood against guilty man, Jew and Gentile alike, and by atoning for sin, opened the Kingdom of Heaven to mankind: thus consummating the union of the Creator with His creature. Each individual soul may accordingly take

to himself every single incident related in the sacred books. He may say, looking back on his past life: It was for *me* my Saviour endured these tortures. By His humiliations, He is expiating *my* pride. He was taken bound before Pilate to expiate my disobedience and impatience of control, and my heart's rebellion against the decrees of His providence. He suffered Himself to be struck and spat upon to make amends for my too-great love of luxury and pleasure. The pain He suffered in His scourging, in His thorn-pierced Head, in the wounds of His shoulder and His hands and feet are the tokens of His love for me and His craving for my love, and are perpetually, as long as the world lasts, appealing to His heavenly Father for mercy on *me* and on all mankind.

The Church, animated by this spirit, encourages her children to put away every thought that would distract them from the contemplation of Christ, and of Him crucified. Should the feast of the Annunciation occur in Holy Week, its celebration is postponed till after Easter, and a commemoration of the Passion is made on all weekdays in Passion-week, including saints' days. To emphasize the great truth that during these days Jesus was suffering persecution at the hands of the ungrateful people whom He had become man to redeem, and that He had to flee and hide Himself from them, the Church veils the crucifix and all statues in purple. The station for Passion Sunday is the Basilica of St. Peter.

In the epistle, St. Paul, writing to the Hebrews (ch. ix.), gives them that sublime explanation of the meaning of the ancient rites which symbolized the shedding of the blood of the Son of God for the redemption of mankind: "For if the blood of goats and oxen, and the ashes of a heifer being sprinkled, sanctify such as are defiled to the cleansing of the flesh, how much more shall the Blood of Christ, Who by the Holy Ghost offered Himself unspotted unto God, cleanse

our conscience from dead works to serve the living God? Therefore He is the Mediator of the New Testament."

In the gospel which is according to St. John (ch. viii.), we read how our Lord Who had hitherto spoken to the multitude only in parables, and proclaimed more by the works He did (as He Himself says) than by the words He uttered that He was indeed the Messiah, openly declared Himself to the Jews. They had taunted Him with having a devil, and said, "Art thou greater than our Father Abraham who is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom dost thou make thyself?" Jesus answered, "If I glory myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father that glorifieth me of whom you say that he is your God; and you have not known him, but I know him. . . . They took up stones therefore to cast at him. But Jesus hid himself and went out of the Temple."

Jesus hid Himself because His time had not yet come; and because the prophecy had to be fulfilled that He should die as a malefactor "on the accursèd tree."

In the epistles of the weekdays which are drawn from the Old Testament, the Church puts before us various narratives all pointing to the same great truth, that the mercy and compassion of God is unceasingly exercised upon all His creatures, even on sinners: to all those who humble themselves and repent. The story of Nineveh is given on Monday. On Tuesday we read of God's protection of Daniel in the lions' den. The laws of God promulgated by Moses, in which charity to their neighbour and justice is so strongly insisted upon, is the subject of the lesson. On Wednesday and on Thursday, the beautiful appeal of Azarius taken from the prophecy of Daniel (ch. iii.), an appeal which we know was never made in vain.

> "For we," he urges, "O Lord, are diminished more than any nation and are brought low in all

> the earth this day for our sins, . . . nevertheless in a contrite and humble spirit, let us be accepted . . . for there is no confusion to them that trust in Thee. And now we follow Thee with all our heart, and we fear Thee and seek Thy face. Put us not to confusion but deal with us according to Thy meekness and according to the multitude of Thy mercies. And deliver us according to Thy wonderful works and give glory to Thy name, O Lord."

The feast of the Seven Dolours of the B. Virgin Mary is kept on Friday in Passion week. It was first established at Cologne in 1423 by Theodoric, the holy archbishop of that see; and during the pontificate of Benedict XIII. its celebration was extended to the whole Church. We venerate on this day the sorrows of that Blessed Mother of whom Simeon foretold that a sword should pierce her soul, that out of many hearts thoughts should be revealed. Seven times was the loving heart of Mary pierced by this sword :

On hearing this prophecy when the sufferings of her divine Son and her own were interiorly revealed to her.

At the flight with the Infant Jesus into Egypt.

At the "three days' loss," when the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem and his parents knew it not.

When she met Jesus carrying the Cross.

At the Crucifixion. At the taking down of His body from the Cross and at the burial of Jesus.

"Mary stood by the Cross," the Scriptures tell us. She stood there in her capacity of Mother of God and Mother of men : of the second Eve by the side of the second Adam. By her *Fiat*, her perfect obedience and conformity to the will of God, she made reparation to the divine Justice for Eve's disobedience and rebellion to it. In the *Stabat Mater*, the liturgical hymn which celebrates the sorrows of Mary, and is recited by every priest at Mass on this day, the Church does homage to

her unique position in the counsels of God, and implores her help and protection.

The gospel of St. John (ch. xii.), records that "Jesus, therefore, six days before the pasch came to Bethania." The first day of the Azymes was held on the following Thursday, consequently our Saviour reached Bethania on the Saturday in Passion week. St. John goes on to relate that "when Jesus was in Bethania in the house of Simon the leper, they made him a supper there, and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those that were at table with Him. Mary therefore having an alabaster box of precious ointment, took a pound of ointment of right spikenard, and breaking the box, she poured it out on His head, and she anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair, and the room was filled with the odour of her ointment."

Let us take a little time to contemplate this blessed scene. In a few days we shall see our beloved Saviour delivered over into the hands of His torturers and put to death. Here we see Him surrounded by loving friends, the hearts of Martha and Mary overflowing with gratitude to Him, Lazarus who had been raised to a new life animated (can we doubt it ?) with but one hope and desire—to spend it in His service. But even here the tempter was not absent; and he of whom our Lord said afterwards "he hath a devil," complains of the waste; of money thrown away which might have been given to the poor. Let us pay great attention to our Lord's answer, for there is not one of us who may not learn a great lesson from it. "And Jesus said, Let her alone; why do you trouble this woman, for she hath wrought a good work in me. For the poor you have always with you, but me you have not always. Amen, I say to you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world that also which she hath done shall be told for a memory of her."

Not even the infidel who scoffs at the virgin-birth, or ascension of the body of our Lord into Heaven, would

think of suggesting that it was His indifference to the claims of the poor which made Christ use these words. Such a thought would be incredible even to the blindest and the most ignorant. But what we have to learn from them is that love gives value to all we do in His eyes, and that nothing has any value for Him without it. It was love, the consuming love of one to whom much had been forgiven because she loved much, which caused what Truth itself called "a good work wrought in Me." Thus when we bring our jewels, our richest possessions to adorn His altar, or even burn our candles or cast our flowers at His feet when He is borne in procession in the Sacrament of His love, if we do these things with Magdalen's love, the memory of them will be recalled by the recording angel at our judgment, and these proofs of our love will be held in everlasting remembrance.

It was the custom of the Sovereign Pontiff to commemorate Magdalen's gift by large alms to the poor, which he himself distributed amongst them in memory of it.

HOLY WEEK

We learn from the writings of St. Denis, who lived in the third century, of the veneration of the Church and the faithful for this week which existed even in his day, St. John Chrysostom, who lived a hundred years later calls it in one of his homilies, the "Great Week," because of the great mysteries which are then celebrated. In the severity of their practices of penance during this holy season, the Eastern churches have far exceeded the Mother Church, and this severity dates from the earliest centuries. We learn from St. Epiphanus that some devout Christians fasted from Monday in Holy Week till the dawn of Easter Sunday; and the general practice was to fast from Maundy Thursday until Easter morning. As striking as their severe fasts

were the long hours spent by the faithful in prayer in the churches during this hallowed time. The night between Good Friday and Saturday was commonly spent in one uninterrupted vigil in memory of the Sacrifice on Mount Calvary. But the longest of these vigils was that of Holy Saturday, which was kept up till Easter Sunday, and was joined in by the whole of the people. They assisted thus at the final preparation of the catechumens, and the administration of baptism; nor did they desist from prayer or break their fast till after the holy Sacrifice was offered.

This devout observance of days made holy by the recollection of the death of the Son of God was not confined to the practice of the Church, or the taste and discretion of individuals in their private capacity. It was recognized and made the subject of laws by all Christian kings and princes. "The civil law united with the Church in order to bring about this solemn rest from toil and business which so eloquently expresses the state of mourning of the Christian world. The thought of the sufferings and death of Jesus was the one pervading thought. The Divine Office and prayer were the sole occupation of the people. Cessation from servile work was customary for many centuries in Holy Week. The law of Gratian and Theodosius forbade all law proceedings during the forty days before Easter. This code was extended by Theodosius in 389, and the new decree forbade all pleadings for seven days before and seven days after Easter."*

St. Leo mentions in one of his sermons that the Roman Emperors had long observed the holy practice of ordering the release of prisoners and granting life to men condemned to death at this season. In honour of our Lord's Passion and Resurrection, they humbly withheld the exercise of their sovereign justice and granted pardon to a number of criminals. Their intention thereby was to imitate the Divine Goodness

* "Liturgical Year: Passion-tide," p. 4.

by their exercise of clemency during these days when the world owes its salvation to the Divine clemency.

Ancient Gaul was not behind Italy in this respect; as St. Eligius, Bishop of Noyon during the reign of the Merovingian dynasty, says in a sermon on Maundy Thursday, "On this day when the Church grants indulgences to penitents and absolution to sinners, magistrates also relent their severity and grant pardon to the guilty. Throughout the whole world prisons are thrown open. Princes show clemency to criminals. Masters forgive their slaves."

As Dom Guéranger sadly remarks, "the revolutions of the last eighty (or, as we should now say, the last 130) years have produced the secularization of society in every country in Europe; that is to say, the effacing everything from the national customs and legislations of nations and peoples which had been introduced by the supernatural element of Christianity."* Such an expression as we find in documents of the Middle ages that an event took place "under the reign of Christ": *Regnante Domino nostro Jesu Christo* (meaning Holy Week) seems almost incredible in our degenerate times.

PALM SUNDAY

The earliest account we have of the ceremonies which took place in Jerusalem, the very cradle of Christianity, on this day, we owe to the pilgrim Etheria.† We propose therefore giving a sketch of these before describing what happened later in the Western Church.

We learn from this narrative that "the usual Sunday services took place in the larger church on Golgotha called the Martyrium. About one p.m. the people with the bishop assembled on the Mount of Olives in the church of the Eleona, at the cave where tradition said

* "Liturgical Year: Passion-tide," p. 6.

† See *ante*, p. 52.

that our Lord used to teach. There a service consisting of hymns, antiphons and lections from Scripture was held, lasting about two hours. At three o'clock, the congregation ascended to the summit of the mount whence Christ ascended to Heaven, and a similar service was conducted. At five o'clock the account of our Lord's entry into Jerusalem was read from the gospels, and all rose up and, with branches of palm or olive in their hands, descended the hill, singing: *Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.*" In this manner the bishop, who represented our Lord, was conducted down into the city and to the Church of the Anastasis, where vespers were sung, and the function concluded with an *oratio ad crucem*, or prayer in the chapel of the Holy Cross."* These ceremonies were adopted in the course of the next century in the Eastern churches, and thence found their way to Gaul. The Sacramentary of Bobbio in the seventh or eighth century contains the earliest rubrics for the blessing and procession of palms, and the custom of carrying branches in procession is thus mentioned in the pilgrim Etheria's diary: " All the children in the neighbourhood, even those who are too young to walk, are carried by their parents on their shoulders, all of them bearing branches, some of palms and some of olives, and thus the bishop is escorted in the same manner as our Lord was of old."†

The blessing of the palms according to the Roman rite is a remarkable one, and has been instituted, doubtless, to mark the importance the Church attaches to the ceremony. The introit, collect, epistle, gradual, gospel and even preface are recited by the celebrant as if Mass was being offered up; but after the Sanctus, he turns to the special object of these prayers and petitions and begins the blessing of the palms. These

* There were three separate churches on Golgotha: (1) the circular church of the Anastasis (Resurrection), built over the H. Sepulchre on the site of the present one. (2) The great church (Martyrium), on the site of the Crucifixion, built by Constantine and St. Helena. (3) The chapel of the Holy Cross.

† " The Pilgrimage of Etheria," by M. L. McClure and C. L. Feltoe. S.P.C.K.

blessings have, all of them, reference to the symbolical meanings of the olive and palm, and are very striking and beautiful. The palm-branches or their substitutes in countries where the palm and olive are not indigenous, are carried in procession and held in the hand during the reading of the Passion during the Mass, and from the Preface to the Communion.

The joyous tone which characterizes the hymns and antiphons sung during the procession of palms are in striking contrast to that which marks the lessons and other parts of the Mass celebrated on this day. The tract is taken from the 22nd Psalm of David, in which the Church sees a foreshadowing of the anguish felt by our divine Saviour on the cross :

O God, my God, look upon me : why hast Thou forsaken me ?
Far from my salvation are the words of my sins.
O my God, I shall cry by day and Thou wilt not hear, and by night and it shall not be imputed as folly in me.
But thou dwellest in the holy place, O Thou the praise of Israel.
In Thee have our Fathers hoped ; they hoped and Thou hast delivered them.
They have cried out to Thee and they were saved : they trusted in Thee and were not confounded.
But I am a worm and no man : the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people.

The epistle is taken from that of St. Paul to the Philippians (ch. ii.), in which the great apostle puts in a few words the inner meaning of the astounding mystery of the Incarnation, and the light in which we should view it.

> " He, Christ Jesus, humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted him and hath given him a name which is above all names, that in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of those that are in Heaven, on earth, and under the earth : and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of the Father."

The Passion of our Lord according to St. Matthew follows the tract, and at its termination the gospel of the day (Matt. ch. xxvii.) is read.

The psalm at the offertory is taken from one of the Messianic prophecies of David :

> "My heart hath expected reproach and misery : and I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none : and for one that would comfort me and I found none. They gave me gall for my food and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

If the devout Christian besides following the prayers, and reading of the Passion in his Mass-book, wishes to accompany our Lord in spirit during these last few days which preceded His death, the narrative of the Evangelists, especially that of St. John, will enable him to do so. And what graces may he not receive for so doing ! For (as all spiritual writers teach) if virtue went out of our Lord's garments when they were devoutly touched, how much more will grace go out from Him to the souls of those who piously contemplate His divine actions on earth, and seek to learn the hidden meaning which is attached to every one of them.

There are three points which stand out prominently in these days of benediction : of benediction to *us* and of suffering and anguish to the loving heart of our divine Saviour. In the first place, we can see in His frequent exhortations and His multiplied parables, how He sought by rebuke and patient expostulation to win over His enemies, and force them to acknowledge Him as the Messiah. Another most striking feature of these days—one no doubt which He intended as an example to His disciples, the future foundation-stones of His Church—was, how He combined prayer with fasting and austerity. Ascetic writers have constantly drawn attention to the fact that though the people of Jerusalem

came out to meet Jesus with songs of triumph and jubilation, no one offered Him hospitality. Many believed, indeed, but because of the High Priest and the Ancients, they did not dare to confess Him; and as the Scriptures say, they feared the judgment of man rather than of God.

Of the night of Palm Sunday the gospel says (Luke ch. xxi.), "but at night going out He abode in the mount that is called Olivet." Again we read of Monday (Matt. ch. xxi.), "In the morning returning into the city He was hungry." Are we not to learn from this that no great work can be done for God without preparation such as this of which Christ Himself gives us the example? And we should recall this example not only when we are working for God, but also when we are suffering for Him; when He is asking us, as He will surely sooner or later, to drink the chalice with Him. Again, it is not without deep significance that the Scripture shows us how He, the Creator, left His wants to be supplied by His creatures, the work of His hand. When He required the ass, "the colt of her who was used to the plough," for His modest triumph, He begged it of its owner, sending him the message through His disciples that the Master had need of it. It is ever the same. "The heaven of heavens is the Lord's, but the earth He has made over to the children of men." "O man," He seems to say, "this is your moment; it is brief, but upon it your eternity depends. Magdalen pours out her precious ointment on My head and My promise to her was that wherever the Gospel should be preached this should be told of her. I am with you still. My poor represent *Me*. What you do to them I shall look upon as done to Myself. I endowed My Church when I gave it the commission to teach all nations, not with silver and gold but with loving and grateful hearts. These will supply not only My needs, but the needs of My poor with whom I identify Myself. I, the Lord, have no need of your goods, but by doing

this I give you the power of proving your love for Me and so earning My gratitude and an eternal reward."

Dom Guéranger tells us that so strongly were the early Christians persuaded of these truths, that they were accustomed to double their alms in Holy Week. St. John Chrysostom is a witness of this fact; and he mentions as an additional reason, that they desired by their abundant almsgiving to imitate in some slight measure the generosity with which our divine Saviour poured out His graces and favours on mankind.

The epistle for Monday in Holy Week is taken from Isaias (ch. iv.).

> "In those days Isaias said: The Lord hath opened my ear making known His will to me, and I do not resist: I have not gone back. I have given my body to the strikers and my cheeks to them that plucked them. I have not turned away my face from them that rebuked me and spit upon me. . . . Behold, the Lord God is my helper: who is he that shall condemn me? Lo, they shall all be destroyed as a garment, the moth shall eat them up. Who is there among you that feareth the Lord, that heareth the voice of His servant? He that walketh in darkness and hath no light, let him hope in the name of the Lord and lean upon his God."

On Tuesday in Holy Week, holy Church bids us in the introit of the Mass, not only to honour the Cross of Christ but to glory in it.

> "We ought to glory in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom is our salvation, life and resurrection; by whom we have been saved and delivered."
>
> Ps. "May God have mercy on us, and bless us, may His countenance shine upon us and may He have mercy on us."

The Passion is taken from the gospel according to St. Mark. It was on Wednesday, two days before the great paschal festival, that the High Priests and the Ancients concluded their plot to take away the life of Jesus, and made their bargain with Judas to deliver Him into their hands. In order to make atonement to the Son of God for this act of treachery on the part of His creatures, and to mark her detestation of it, the Church from the earliest ages has devoted this day of the week to penitential exercises. With Wednesday we begin the Lenten season. In the Religious Orders, Wednesdays as well as Fridays are the days appointed for abstinence and fasting. The Ember days begin on Wednesday.

In the introit of Mass for Wednesday in Holy Week, holy Church makes reparation to the Name "which is above all names" for the insults the perfidious Jews heaped upon it.

> "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in Heaven, on earth and under the earth: because the Lord became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross: therefore the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of the Father."

In the lesson which is taken from Isaias, we read of the terrible denunciations of the inspired writer upon those who conspired against the life of the most innocent Redeemer, and upon all who have not done penance or repented of their crimes.

In the epistle, which is also from the prophet of the Incarnation, he sounds a gentler and more tender note as if he was addressing himself to the repentant sinner.

> "In those days, Isaias said: Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? and he shall grow up as a tender plant before him and as a root out of the thirsty ground. There is no beauty in him, nor comeliness. And

we have seen him and there was no sightliness that we should be desirous of him, despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity. And his look was as it were hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows. And we have thought him as it were a leper and as one struck by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for sins; the chastisement of our peace was upon him and by his bruises, we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, everyone hath turned aside into his own way: and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all."

The Passion of our Lord according to St. Luke, is read this day. Tenebrae, or Matins and Lauds, formerly celebrated in the night hours, but at the present day —for the convenience of the laity—in the afternoon, commences on Wednesday in Holy Week. The ceremonies observed at this office are deeply significant. A large triangular candlestick is placed inside the sanctuary holding fifteen candles of yellow wax, similar to those used at Masses for the dead. One of these candles is extinguished at the end of every psalm or canticle, and the six candles burning on the altar are put out at the end of Lauds whilst the Benedictus is being sung. The lighted candle which is still burning on the top of the triangle is then placed behind the altar, where it is concealed during the recitation of the Miserere. At the conclusion of the psalm, a noise is made in the sanctuary, the candle is brought back from the back of the altar, and Tenebrae concludes. The desertion of the apostles is typified by the extinction of the candles on the triangular candlestick and altar; whilst the light which signifies Christ continues to shine, though it is for a time hidden. The withdrawal of the candle behind the altar signifies His burial; the noise

the confusion of nature, earthquakes and splitting of rocks at His death, and the return of the light the peaceful triumph of Christ over the powers of evil and darkness.

MAUNDY THURSDAY*

Maundy Thursday was in the Old Law the first day of the Azymes. It is the day when the Church commemorates the institution of the holy Eucharist and of the Priesthood of the New Law. In primitive times it was also the day when public penitents, after six weeks of penance, were solemnly readmitted into the Church, and allowed to partake of holy Communion with the rest of the faithful.

In the fourth century we learn from the pilgrim Etheria that the day was kept in Jerusalem as follows: "'The divine office began at cockcrow in the Church of the Anastasis. At 4 p.m. the bishop said a Mass in the Martyrium, followed by another in the chapel of the Holy Cross. At 7 p.m. the people assembled at the Eleona on the Mount of Olives and remained there singing hymns until eleven o'clock, when they ascended to the top of the hill, and another series of hymns, antiphons and lections occupied them for the rest of the night.' In ancient times, in order to recall more vividly the institution of the Eucharist, Mass was this day celebrated in the evening, and even in the Roman Missal it is still directed to be celebrated after none (3 p.m.)."†

The Church, in order to express her holy joy at the institution of the Eucharist, that unspeakable gift to man which was to be a memorial to all times of His redemption through the sacrifice of the Cross, celebrates Mass on this day with every mark of jubilee. The sanctuary is decorated with lights and flowers, and the

* This name comes from the first word of the antiphon: *Mandatum novum do vobis.* The ecclesiastical name for it is Cœna Domini.

† "The Church's Year," pp. 37, 38, by J. R. McKee of the London Oratory.

priests are robed in white vestments as on days of great festivity. Bells are rung during the chanting of the *Gloria in excelsis*, after which they are no longer rung until High Mass on Holy Saturday. The Church's mourning for her divine Head is typified by this silence; it also commemorates the desertion of the Apostles, whose office it was, as heralds of Christ, like bells to summon the faithful to the House of God.

The introit is as follows:

> "We ought to glory in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ in whom is our salvation, life and resurrection: by whom we have been saved and delivered."
>
> Ps. "May God have mercy on us and bless us: may His countenance shine upon us and may He have mercy on us. Amen."

The epistle is from that of St. Paul to the Corinthians (I., ch. xi.), in which he specially dwells on the oneness of the sacrifice of the Eucharist with that on Mount Calvary, in the words: "As often as you shall eat this bread or drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord until He come." He also warns them how careful they should be to prepare their souls to partake of these divine mysteries, lest they should be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord. "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself not discerning the body of the Lord."

In the gospel, which is from that of St. John (ch. xiii.), we read of the washing of the feet of the disciples by our Lord. This outward purification was intended by Him to convey the same great truth, that to approach this adorable Sacrament, our souls must be purified from sin, which clings to us even as dust adheres to the feet of the wayfarer.

Two hosts are consecrated at the Mass of Maundy Thursday. One is consumed by the celebrant and the other is reserved by him for the Mass of the following

day. " On Good Friday, the Church suspends the daily sacrifice. Such is the impression produced by the anniversary of Our Saviour's death that the Church dares not to renew upon her altars the immolation which was then offered on Calvary; or rather her renewal of it will be by fixing all her thoughts on the terrible scene of that first Good Friday."*

The second host is carried in procession after Mass to a side altar, whilst the beautiful hymn Pange Lingua is sung by the choir. It is deposited there in a tabernacle surrounded by lights and flowers; and members of the congregation take it in turn to watch and pray beside it.

The ceremony of the washing of the feet was once common all over the Christian world. It was practised in Vienna by the late emperor, Franz Josef, till the time of his death. The Pope performs it yearly in Rome, and the ceremony is common in cathedrals and amongst religious communities all over the Christian world. After Mass and vespers are concluded, the altar is stripped of all its cloths and ornaments, whilst the choir chants the antiphon: " They parted My garments among them and upon My vesture they cast lots," followed by the 21st Psalm. Tenebrae, *e.g.*, matins and lauds for Good Friday, are sung during the afternoon.

The devotion practised in Rome of visiting the Blessed Sacrament where it is reserved for public adoration on Maundy Thursday in the seven basilicas can also be carried out in London or any city, and it is one that has been largely indulgenced by the Holy See. In whatever manner we employ the time, whether in the seclusion of our rooms (perhaps far from church), or in worshipping before the tabernacle, no better food for prayer and contemplation could be found than that which the gospel of St. John gives us in the discourse after the Last Supper. The passage is prefaced by those words of deepest significance, " Jesus, knowing that

* " Liturgical Year: Passion-tide," p. 373.

His hour was come that He should pass out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." The end was—as we all know—the fulfilment of His promise, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you." For in "His sacramental presence in the Holy Eucharist, the sacrament of mutual abiding," as it has been well named, all the promises God has made to men have been fulfilled. The inspired prophet had it in mind when he spoke of the wonderful tabernacle, the tabernacle of God with man, when he asked: "What is the good thing of him and what is his beautiful thing, but the corn of the elect and wine springing forth virgins?" And again in another place when he said, "Thou didst feed thy people with the food of angels and givest them bread from Heaven prepared without labour, having in it all that is delicious." Jesus Himself announced it when He twice told His followers on the shores of Lake Gennezareth, "I am the bread of life," and again, "I am the living bread which came down from Heaven; amen, amen, I say to you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you." Astounding words! Divine grace only could give man power to believe them. Thus a holy writer of the twelfth century, summing up what can be said about the difficulty we have in grasping them, says that there are two in particular, "One is that such things should be done by God, and the other is that they should be believed by man. . . . In truth God is the author both of the thing that is believed, and of the faith that believes, and God is equally wonderful in both."*

We owe to the gospel of St. Luke the knowledge that our Lord gave to St. Peter and St. John the commission to prepare the pasch for Him. And spiritual writers have seen a special fitness in the choice. For in St. Peter, who was divinely inspired to recognize the divinity

* Bridgett's "History of the Holy Eucharist."

of Christ, they see the type of faith, and in St. John the type of love ; who, therefore, could have been more fittingly chosen than these two to prepare the heavenly banquet which faith reveals to us through love ?

All being ready, Jesus repairs with His disciples to Jerusalem ; and as it behoved Him to fulfil all justice, He partakes with them of the Paschal Lamb, figure of Himself—of the Lamb Who was slain from the beginning of the world. Henceforth it was to lose all significance : for

In hac mansa novi regis,
Novum Pascha novæ legis,
Phase vitus terminat.

The legal repast being ended, Jesus gave Himself to His disciples under the appearance of bread and wine, and with the words : " Do this in commemoration of Me," He ordained His apostles priests—thus founding the Christian Church, which was to offer up the sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist till the end of time by His power and in His name. Then (again we read), the Scripture was fulfilled, and Satan having entered into Judas, the traitor went forth to betray His Master.

In the beginning of the gospel of St. John, we read the words : " As many as received him, he gave them power to be made the sons of God to them that believe in his name." These, the chosen disciples were those who had received Him. They were also those who had continued with Him in His temptations. In the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters of the same gospel, we read how Jesus gave them power to be made the sons of God.

God is love. He has proclaimed this doctrine not in one spot nor on one occasion only, but on all occasions and in every place. To return love for love is the first and greatest commandment given by Him to man. And the second is like unto this, that he should love his neighbour as himself. Jesus accordingly puts

this doctrine in the very forefront of His discourse. For, after declaring that, " the Son of man is glorified and God is glorified in Him," with hardly a break, He goes on to say, " A new commandment I give unto you ; That you love one another as I have loved you that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another." Love of God for man, and of man for God and for His likeness—seeing it in his fellow-man—may be said to be the burden of this heavenly discourse. For if our Lord leaves it in order to reassure His disciples as to what is going to happen to Him or to them, He speedily returns to it. And as He knows that it is of all His precepts the one which the nature of man makes it the hardest for him to accept, He announces to them the wonderful means by which this miraculous change in man's nature will be effected :

" If anyone love me, he will keep my word and my Father will love him and we will love him and we will come to him and will make our abode with him. . . . These things have I spoken to you abiding with you. But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring all things to your mind whatsoever I shall have said to you."

Jesus when He spoke these words, was about to expiate the sins of mankind on the Cross. By so doing, He was to restore man to the place he held in God's favour before the fall. Grace was once more to reign where before had reigned sin and death ; and this reign was inaugurated by the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost comes to us with grace, He gives us Himself in grace, and He really and essentially dwells in us by grace. Moreover, it is He who transforms us by His power into the image of God. It is in this light that we should read what follows :

" I am the vine, you are the branches ; he that

> abideth in me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing. . . . If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will and it shall be done unto you. . . . As the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love, as I also have kept my Father's commandments and do abide in His love. This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you."

And because love always leads to union, and because this divine union can only exist in the heart of man when he is united to his fellow-man through the cords of charity, our Lord concludes by the prayer:

> "Holy Father, keep them in thy name whom thou hast given me that they may be one as we also are. . . . And not for them only do I pray but for them also who through their word shall believe in me. That they all may be one as thou Father in me and I in Thee that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me and the glory which thou hast given me, I have given to them that they may be one as we also are one. . . . Just Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have made known thy name to them, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them."

"When Jesus had said these things, He went forth with His disciples over the brook Cedron," to give the last proof of His love for mankind by dying for their salvation. And then to show man that He, the Son of God, was of like nature to him, He allowed His sacred

humanity to assert its power over Him and " He began to be sorrowful and to be sad." Let us contemplate Him prostrate on the ground weighed down by the sins of mankind beseeching His heavenly Father that if possible the chalice should pass from Him. " Nevertheless," He fails not to add, " not as I will but as Thou wilt."

To commemorate the hour which our divine Saviour spent in the garden of Gethsemane, when " being in agony, He prayed the longer, and His sweat became as drops of blood falling down to the ground," is a devotion which has become widespread in the last two hundred years. It will ever be connected with the name of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. Our Lord revealed to her that what most afflicted His loving Heart was the indifference and ingratitude of mankind ; not only of sinners but of those whom He had overwhelmed with His favours, and proofs of His love. For even to John, the beloved disciple, He spoke the gentle word of reproach, " Could you not watch one hour with me ? " To watch, therefore, in a spirit of reparation with our Lord, compassionating His loving Heart weighed down by the sins of man and by the anticipation of the tortures which the atonement of those sins would cost Him, is an action unspeakably pleasing to Him, and to which He has attached special graces and blessings. It is the custom, therefore, not only of numerous communities, but also of many devout persons living in the world, to devote what has been called " the holy hour," between eleven and midnight on Thursday night, not only on the eve of Good Friday but on all Thursdays, to prayer and meditation on the sufferings and death of our Lord.

GOOD FRIDAY

We learn from the devout pilgrim from whose narrative we have already quoted, that it was the custom of the faithful in Jerusalem to spend Good Friday night on the summit of Mount Olivet. The service at which she was present ended at about 3 a.m.; after which those who assisted at it descended the hill to a church built on the spot "where the Lord prayed." "After a service there, they entered the garden of Gethsemane which was lit up by more than two hundred lights. After a prayer and a hymn, the account of the betrayal was read from the gospel. The procession then descended to Jerusalem . . . and traversed the city to the place of the Crucifixion where the narrative of Christ's trial before Pilate was read, it being now daylight. The bishop dismissed the people with the exhortation to return for the adoration of the Cross about 7 a.m. The people spent some time in devotion at the column of the flagellation and on Mount Sion before returning to their homes. At seven o'clock the bishop seated himself on his throne in the Chapel of the Holy Cross with a table covered with white linen before him. The silver shrine containing the true Cross was laid upon the table and opened and its sacred contents displayed. The people approached in order, knelt, kissed the Cross and touched it with their forehead and eyes, but not with their hands; the deacons keeping watch the while. At noon, the people assembled in the open court between the chapel of the Holy Cross and the Anastasis. Lections relating to the Passion from the Old and New Testaments were read until 3 p.m., concluding with St. John's description of our Lord's death. Thereupon the congregation moved to the Martyrium, and the description of the Descent from the Cross was read, a prayer was recited, and the

catechumens were blessed. This concluded the public services; but the young clerics spent the night watching in the church."*

Such was the procedure in Jerusalem in the fourth century, and we know that the Roman Church of the same date had many features in common with the Eastern one. Good Friday, both in the Western and in the Eastern Churches, has ever been observed as a day of mourning and fasting; the churches veiled in black, altars stripped of their ornaments, all but the side altar where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, the priests dressed in black vestments—all symbolizing the mourning of the Bride of Christ with her divine Spouse.

The service on this day begins with the prophecy of Osee, foretelling God's merciful designs in favour of the Gentiles who were dead but who will rise again in Christ, as He will do after three days in the tomb. A lesson is then read from Exodus, in which Moses expounds the law to the people of Israel concerning the slaying of the Paschal Lamb, the type of the Son of God Who sacrificed His life on Mount Calvary for man's redemption. This is followed by the reading of the Passion according to St. John. The solemn intercession of the Church for the needs of the whole world which follows is of very ancient origin. The manner of their recitation is thought to be a survival of the ancient order observed in solemn prayers, *i.e.*, the celebrant exhorted to prayer (*Oremus*) and then specified the particular object to be prayed for; the deacon directed the people to kneel (*Flectamus genua*), and all remained for some time in silent prayer until the subdeacon bade them rise (*Levate*). Then the celebrant summed up as it were the individual intercessions of the congregation in the collect. There is a great significance in this prayer. Because as we learn from St. Paul (Heb. ch. v.), Christ offered up to his eternal

* "The Church's Year," by Fr. McKee, pp. 41-2.

Father on the cross prayers and supplications with a strong cry and tears for all mankind, so the Church in His name prays and invites the prayers of the faithful for those for whom He shed His precious Blood.

The Adoration of the Cross then takes place. "The cross is a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to Gentiles," but to the Christian it is a pledge of his salvation and the foundation of all his hopes. This ceremony, begun in Jerusalem after the discovery of the true Cross by St. Helena, spread later on to the Western churches and was adopted both in the West and East. To the devout and well-instructed Catholic, this is no idle ceremony. He sees indeed but a representation of Christ, but while kissing the wounds on the feet and side, grace moves him to grieve at the "great price" at which his soul was purchased by the Son of God, and to make a true act of contrition for his sins.

Whilst the Cross is being venerated, first by the clergy and afterwards by the laity, the *Improperia*—or Reproaches addressed by the Messiah to the Jews in the prophecies of Jeremias—are chanted. These prayers, which can be traced in the Greek ritual as far back as the fifth century, are still sung partly in that language. As soon as this ceremony is concluded, the Blessed Sacrament is brought back in procession from the side chapel or altar where it has been reserved since the Mass of Maundy Thursday, and placed on the High Altar; the Vexilla Regis being sung the while. This is followed by the Mass of the Presanctified, which is, properly speaking, a special rite of Communion service at which only the celebrant communicates. Holy Church suspends the sacrifice of the Mass on this day in homage of the great and supreme Sacrifice which Christ Himself offered up on the Cross, in order that all the thoughts of her children should be directed towards it. The morning service concludes with vespers for the day.

The devotion of the Three Hours commemorating the three hours' agony of our Lord on the Cross, is common

both in this country and on the continent. It originated with the Jesuit, Fr. Messia, in the end of the seventeenth century, and consists of sermons on the words spoken by our Lord, with intervals between for private prayer. *Tenebrae*, for Holy Saturday, are sung on the afternoon of Good Friday.

The three hours during which Jesus hung on the Cross, in unimaginable tortures of mind and body—making atonement in the human nature He had taken upon Himself to His Eternal Father for the sins of mankind—have a special meaning to each one of us. For each one of us can say, "He loved *me* and delivered Himself for me." The Cross became an altar of Sacrifice; and so pleasing was the divine Victim in the eyes of the Eternal Father that from that moment the guilty children of Adam, with whom the Son of God had identified Himself, were reinstated in His favour. The Christian soul, born again of water and the Holy Ghost, became an adopted son, no longer an alien from his Father's home and an outcast. From that time he was incorporated into the mystical body of Christ and made one with Him: "members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones."

The Cross is also a pulpit from which Christ preaches sermons deep and far-reaching. The first word He spoke from the Cross was one of forgiveness. He not only forgave His executioners, but, knowing how contrary forgiveness is to the nature of man, He gave him an example by praying, and making excuses for them. The penitent thief has but to breathe a word of faith and compunction into His ear, and he is promised the reward of paradise. To John, who represents all men, He bequeaths His Blessed Mother. The second Adam bestows the second Eve on the children Whom He loved and with whom He was about to part. She must share His sacrifice, He must be able to say, "What is there that I ought to do more for my vineyard, that I have not done it?" From the sixth to the ninth hour,

Jesus was silent. There is a great mystery contained in the silence of Jesus. There were many things He might have said—for was He not the Eternal Wisdom, the Word made flesh ?—but He knew that He could teach us more by His silence than even by any words He could utter. He knew how the heart of man is prone to pour itself out in complaints and murmurs when God asks of him patience and submission to the divine Will. He knew also that in order to have our conversation in Heaven, we must keep silence on earth. We must be silent in order that we may not miss those whispers of the Holy Spirit which otherwise would pass us unheeded and upon which the whole process of our sanctification depends. The fourth word our Lord spoke from the Cross was : " My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me ? " Let us adore in silence these divine words which give us a glimpse into the interior agony our Redeemer was suffering, when, to use St. Paul's words, He not only took upon Him the sins of mankind, but " became sin," so that He might cleanse him from them by the baptism of His precious Blood.

" I thirst ! " Jesus does not tell us of the tortures He is suffering, because, terrible as they were, they were to have an end. But He complains of His thirst, because it was to last for all time ; even now He thirsts for souls, and He will do so till the last of the number of the elect is made up. And this word is addressed to each one of us. We can all minister to this divine thirst by praying and working, to the extent that lies in us, for the souls of our neighbours. If we cannot give a cup of cold water to a disciple without a reward, how great will be our reward and the gratitude of our divine Saviour when we help by our prayers to save, or bring to the knowledge of the truth, the souls for whom He thirsted on the Cross.

" All is consummated," was the sixth word, and then He cried out, " Father, into Thy hands I commend my Spirit," and saying this, He gave up the ghost.

In the revelations of the saints, we learn much about the light in which our Lord would have us view His Sacred Passion. He revealed to St. Gertrude that there was no remedy on earth for sin so efficacious as a devout recollection of His Passion joined to true repentance. She was also told that to meditate on the sufferings of Christ was of infinitely greater value than any other meditation, and that even to look at a crucifix devoutly would meet with an eternal reward. To B. Angela of Foligno, He spoke these words: "Blessed are you of My Father who compassionate Me and sorrow with Me and who walking after Me in My footsteps have merited to wash your stoles in my Blood. Blessed are you who compassionate Me crucified for you, and afflicted with immense griefs that I might satisfy for you and redeem you from eternal pain. For, compassionating Me in My poverty, sorrow and contempt borne for your souls, you have been found worthy. Blessed are you who shall be mindfully and devoutly compassionate towards My Passion which is the miracle of all ages, the salvation and sole refuge of sinners. For you shall be truly partakers with Me of the kingdom and glory I have acquired by it, and co-heirs with Me for ever and ever. Blessed are you of My Father, and the Holy Ghost, because when I came unto My own you have not repulsed Me . . . but by your compassion have received Me, a desolate stranger, into the home and hospitality of your heart. You have compassionated Me stretched naked on the Cross, hungering and thirsting, suffering and dying. By willing to be My companions, you have truly fulfilled the works of mercy; for I was hungry and at least by compassion, you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me to drink. . . . O, happy and thrice blessed you! Because if I prayed for My executioners, excusing them, what shall I not do for you?"

The Scriptures tell us, "And there stood by the cross of Christ, Mary his mother," to teach us that we shall

always be in the company of Mary when we are closely united to her Son. She will be our advocate with Him ; our prayers, our supplications will gain a hundredfold in efficacy if united with hers. As it was given to no creature to enter into the hidden mysteries of the Passion and death of the Son of God as it was to Mary so she will help us as no one else could do to obtain " the spirit of grace and prayers so that we shall look upon Him Whom we have pierced, and mourn for Him as one mourneth for an only son, and grieve for him as the manner is to grieve for the death of the first-born."

In the Way of the Cross, which frequently terminates the devotions of Good Friday, we can follow step by step the footsteps of our divine Saviour in His sorrowful way from the Praetorium to Calvary. We shall not be alone. Mary will be with us, and the Angel who strengthened our Lord in the garden of Gethsemane, and our own angel guardian, and greater than all will He, the Divine Spirit without whom we cannot even say the Lord Jesus, guide our footsteps, and inflame our hearts with love of our Redeemer, and with grief for our sins which were the cause of His sufferings.

HOLY SATURDAY

To understand the ceremonies of Holy Saturday,* we have to take into consideration the fact that till the middle of the eleventh century, they were performed during the night preceding the dawn of Easter Sunday ; and that the faithful were accustomed to spend the paschal vigil, the greatest in the year, in the church, watching and praying. St. Augustine calls the paschal vigil " the mother of all the vigils," as if all the other

* The services were first transferred to the afternoon and later on to the morning of Holy Saturday. Etheria remarks that " with the exception of one detail they are the same at Jerusalem as at her own home."—" The Church's Year," p. 50.

vigils held during the course of the year took their origin from it. These ceremonies begin with the solemn blessing of fire and incense, which is followed by that of the font and the Paschal candle. All these things are "creatures of God," intended by Him to minister to the wants of man. Jesus said that by His death and resurrection, He would make all things new. Accordingly the Church, His spouse, by her blessings, raises them to newness of life in order to make use of them in His service. As soon as these ceremonies are concluded, the twelve prophecies, all of which have reference to the coming blessings and glories of the Christian dispensation, are read. Each of these is intended in a special manner for the instruction of the catechumens. The recital of the story of the creation from Genesis tells them of their rebirth, as that of the flood does of their regeneration in the saving waters of baptism. The sacrifice of Abraham is a figure of the faith which is to be their support in every trial which God sees fit to send them. The Red Sea, in the fourth prophecy, through which the children of Israel passed dry-shod, was again a figure of the salvation wrought by baptism; and in the same manner, the succeeding prophecies of Isaias, and Baruch, Ezechiel's vision in the plain of dry bones, of the institution of the Passover, and the story of the glorious heroism of the three children, all conveyed lessons of deep meaning to the catechumens, or were types of the mysteries of which they had but lately learnt the full significance.

The Litany of the Saints is recited after the prophecies, and it is followed by High Mass. And here the Church, anticipating as she does, on the eve of many great feasts, the joys that await her children on the following day, causes the *Gloria in excelsis* to be sung, accompanied by the ringing of bells, in joyful commemoration of the Resurrection of her divine Spouse. In the epistle, which is taken from that of St. Paul to the Colossians, we are reminded by the apostle of what should be our share in this tremendous event.

> "Brethren, if you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God: mind the things that are above, not the things that are on earth. For you are dead; and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear who is your life, then you shall appear with Him in glory."

The gospel (Matt. ch. xxviii.) gives the narrative of "Mary Magdalen and the other Mary" visiting the sepulchre where our Lord was laid, and having the news of the Resurrection imparted to them by the Angel. Again the Alleluia is chanted, and three times repeated, at the conclusion of the liturgical prayers. But the Credo is omitted from Mass, for Christ is not yet risen, and the apostles, who are hereafter to have the mission from Him of preaching the gospel to the whole world, are in hiding, within "closed doors, for fear of the Jews." In one heart, only, on Holy Saturday, faith in God's promises never faltered. Mary alone believed when all round her despaired or doubted. It was on this account, as an everlasting tribute to her, that the Church has dedicated Saturday to her honour.

EASTER SUNDAY

To realize to the full the meaning of this glorious feast to Christians, we must reflect on the close union of all the faithful with their Incarnate God. In taking upon Himself our human nature, Christ made Himself one with us. We were born again in very truth with Him, mystically, at Bethlehem. In His Crucifixion our old Adam, the body of sin in us, was crucified in Him (Rom. ch. vi.). We were buried with Him (*Ibid.*). And when He rises from the dead, glorious and triumphant, death having no longer any power over Him, we also should rise and walk with Him in newness of life.

The closer, therefore, our union with Him in spirit, in His infancy and His public life, the more lovingly and compassionately that we have followed Him on His way to Calvary and taken our station at His feet with His blessed Mother and St. John, the more will it be given to us to share in the joys of His resurrection. "By a man came death and by a man the resurrection of the dead, and as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive" (I. Cor. ch. xv.). St. Ignatius tells us that we should exert ourselves powerfully to enter into our divine Saviour's feelings and rejoice with Him in His victory over death and sin and His triumphant resumption of His glorified body. We do not make enough of joy as an element of our spiritual life; and yet how strongly is it insisted upon in both Old and New Testaments. True it is one of the fruits of the Holy Ghost, so that no efforts of ours can acquire it; but we can ask it of Him, humbly and perseveringly, and we can remove obstacles, such as a too great absorption in the things of this life, and a spiritual sloth which engenders sadness.

The Church leaves nothing undone to encourage a holy Easter joy in the hearts of her children. She devotes fifty days to the commemoration of her risen Saviour. During that time all fasting is suspended. "Can the children of the Bridegroom mourn," she seems to say, "as long as the Bridegroom is with them?" In the early days of Christianity (as we learn from the Councils) servile work was forbidden during the whole of Easter week. It was not till the year 1004 that these days were reduced by the Council of Constance to the two days following Easter Sunday. The Council of Macon decreed: "Let no one work during these days, but let all come together to sing the Easter hymns, and assist at the daily Sacrifice and praise our Creator and Redeemer in the evening, morning and midday."

St. Gregory says of this great feast that in the same

way as the most sacred part of the temple was called the Holy of Holies so Easter Sunday should be given the name of the Feast of feasts, or Solemnity of solemnities. The early Fathers of the Church speaking of the substitution of the first day of the week, the day the Lord has made, for the Sabbath of the Jews, say it was fitting that the day on which the Lord rested should have been spent as a day of spiritual repose, but it was a commemoration of a material creation, whereas the Christian holiday commemorates a spiritual one. Abbot Rupert in his learned work, *De divinis Officiis*, remarks, "Let us leave the Jews to enjoy the ancient Sabbath, which is a memorial of the visible creation; they know not how to love or desire or merit aught but earthly things. . . . They refused to recognize the world's Creator as their king because He said: 'Blessed are the poor. Woe to the rich.' . . . Let the lovers of this world keep a sabbath for its creation, but *our* joy is in the salvation of the world, for our life, yea, and our rest, is hidden with Christ in God."

The Jewish Pasch which was a figure of the good things that were to come had no longer any meaning in the Christian dispensation; it was held on the fourteenth day of the moon of March, and the primitive Church, to mark its break with the obsolete observance, decreed that Easter Sunday should never be kept on that day but on the Sunday following it. This rule, however, was only gradually applied in the East. In Asia Minor the Jewish custom was long tolerated in consideration for the prejudices of the Jewish converts: in the first place by St. John in his See of Ephesus and afterwards by his successors. Great efforts were made by successive occupants of the papal throne to induce this province to submit, in order that there might be a uniform celebration of this, the greatest festival in Christendom; but it was not till the middle of the third century that they were successful. Later on the same divergence arose (owing to defective calculation) between

the British, Scottish, and Irish churches and the Mother Church—in the first mentioned case leading to a serious schism. The reform of the calendar by Gregory XIII. in 1581 brought all countries and forms of religious belief into line; the sole exception being the Greek orthodox Church, which, out of opposition to the See of Rome, maintains its independent attitude to the present day.

Only one nocturn is recited in the night Office of Easter Sunday, in consequence of the primitive observance by which the night of Holy Saturday was devoted to prayer and the administration of baptism to catechumens. This was done in order that the canticles with which the Church welcomes the resurrection of the "true light" might be sung at the dawn of sun-rise. It begins with the joyous Invitatory, "The Lord hath truly risen. Alleluia." After the chanting of the three psalms, the gospel of the day is read, which is followed by three lessons of St. Gregory. The Office concludes with a solemn Te Deum.

The station for the celebration of Mass on Easter Sunday was formerly St. Mary Major's, but for the convenience of the vast multitudes who flock to Rome for the Easter feast, it is now celebrated at St. Peter's In those days, too, the band of catechumens clothed in the white robes which they assumed after baptism and wore during the whole of the octave, must have presented a striking spectacle to the faithful.

The antiphon sung by the choir whilst the newly blessed water is taken from the font to be used at the asperges is as follows :

> "I saw water flowing from the right side of the Temple, Alleluia, and all to whom that water came were saved and they shall say Alleluia."
>
> Ps. "Praise the Lord because He is good: because His mercy endureth for ever."

The epistle for Mass on Easter Sunday is taken from that of St. Paul (I. Cor. ch. v.). " Brethren, purge out the old leaven that you may be a new paste as you are unleavened. For Christ our pasch is sacrificed. Therefore, let us feast not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

The Apostle points out in these words how the Jewish nation (the old leaven) had fallen away from the path of truth and justice. He also accentuates our Saviour's warning to His disciples, " Unless your charity abound more than that of the Pharisees, ye shall not enter the kingdom of Heaven." Jesus has come to teach us by His example what the charity of His followers should be like : namely, that it should be founded on sincerity and truth. It must resemble His, for as He said in His sermon at the Last Supper, " I am the way, the truth and the life." And this way led to Mount Calvary. But there is also another lesson to be learned from these words : and that is that it was the passing away of the typical pasch for the true one—the figure for the reality.

The Pasch (according to the Scriptures) commemorated " the Phase or the Passage of the Lord." It was a day of vengeance on God's enemies ; as it was written, " I will pass through the land of Egypt that night and will kill every first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast ; and against all the gods of Egypt, I will execute judgments" (Exod. ch. xii.). Thus the Pasch, though a day of awful punishment to the enemies of God's chosen people, was to them a day of deliverance and mercy. It was commemorated yearly, when the lamb without blemish was eaten to recall the protection of God in the past, and with it to renew their hopes of a future redemption. In this, as in the sacrifice of Abel of his fairest lamb, of Abraham when his arm was stayed by an angel as he was preparing at God's word to sacrifice his only son, we see a type of Christ, the true Lamb

of God Who was to take away the sins of the world; and moreover was to give His flesh and Blood to be eaten " for the life of the world."

Isaiah cries out in his inspired prayer, " Send forth, O Lord, the Lamb, the Ruler of the world ! " And when God's time had been accomplished and the mystery of the Incarnation had come to pass, St. John, His precursor, proclaims His arrival in the words, " Behold the Lamb of God ! Behold him who taketh away the sins of the world."

Many who, from various causes have absented themselves from the Holy Table, some for months, some for years, have in the past week been preparing to obey the Church's command and approach the sacraments of penance and the Holy Eucharist. Let them take to heart the apostle's words and purge out the old leaven. Let them prepare " the wedding garment, making it white in the blood of the Lamb," and so present themselves with joy and confidence at the heavenly banquet. There will they find a welcome such as that which awaited the Prodigal son. The Heavenly Father will greet them with tender embraces, the angels will rejoice over them and they will be reinstated in all the privileges and graces of sonship, and once more be entitled to join in the canticle of the Blessed : " The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and benediction for ever." The sequence or continuation of the Alleluia is said daily at Mass during the octave.

Victimæ Paschali laudes
Immolent Christiani.
Agnus redimet oves :
Christus innocens Patri
Reconciliavit peccatores.

Let Christians offer the sacrifice of praise to the Paschal victim.
The Lamb hath redeemed the sheep.
The innocent Christ has reconciled sinners to His Father.

Mors et vita duello
Conflixere mirando :
Dux vitæ mortuus
Regnat vivus.

Death and Life fought against each other in a wondrous duel.
The King of Life was put to death, yet reigns He alive.

Dic nobis Maria
Quid vidisti in via ?
Sepulchrum Christi viventis
Et gloriam vidi resurgentis ;
Angelicos testes,
Sudarium et vestes.

Tell us, O Mary ! What sawest thou on the way ?
I saw the sepulchre of the living Christ, and the glory of Him that had risen. I saw the angels that were witnesses, the winding sheets and the clothes.

Surrexit Christus spes mea,
Præcedet vos in Galileam.
Scimus Christum surrexisse
A mortuis vere ;
Tu nobis victor
Rex miserere. Amen. Alleluia.

Christ my hope has risen !
He shall go before you into Galilee.
We know that Christ hath truly risen from the dead.
Do Thou, O Conqueror and King, have mercy on us. Amen. Alleluia.

The gospel, which is from St. Mark (ch. xvi.), tells how "Mary Magdalen and Mary the mother of James and Salome brought sweet spices that coming they might anoint Jesus. . . . And entering the sepulchre they saw a young man sitting on the right side clothed with a white robe who saith to them: Be not affrighted. You seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified; he is risen; he is not here; behold the place where they laid him. But go tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee."

According to tradition and the pious belief of the faithful dating from the early ages of the Church, our Lord's first apparition was to His blessed mother. His second was to Magdalen, for St. John tells us in his Gospel how she stayed behind weeping, because they had taken her Lord away and she knew not where they had laid Him. And Jesus, who is never far distant from His servants when they are grieving for being separated from Him, showed Himself to her, but "it was in the disguise of a gardener so that she knew him not." Was it to elicit her humble request which carried so much love with it ? "Sir, if thou hast taken Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him and I will take Him away." "Jesus saith to her, Mary." What a beautiful awakening that one word must have brought to the heart of the penitent! "He Who was dead yet reigns alive. Christ my hope has risen."

This is the feast of the repentant sinner; for have not many made their peace with God and returned.

contrite, from their wanderings in forbidden paths? And so we may believe that God speaks that word of recognition and unspeakable consolation to each one of us which He spoke to her in whose soul seven devils —the seven deadly sins—once reigned. Calling us each by our name, He will say, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love. Thou art mine."

In former times Mass was followed by a solemn blessing of the paschal lamb, which was then killed and eaten at the Pope's table. Eggs were also blessed. The custom of decorating and giving away toys in the shape of eggs is still kept up. But how few realize the meaning of these gifts, or remember that eggs were forbidden luxuries in a more austere age, and were not eaten during the whole of Lent.

EASTER-TIDE AND THE ILLUMINATIVE LIFE

"Easter-tide belongs to the Illuminative Life," Dom Guéranger tells us; "nay, it is the most important part of that life, for it not only manifests, as the last four seasons of the year have done, the humiliations and sufferings of the man-God, it shows Him to us in all His glory. It gives us to see Him expressing in His own sacred Humanity, the highest degree of the creature's transformation in his God."* These words should be deeply imprinted in our minds, for they contain the very gist and kernel of the spiritual life. For it is only in tracing the life of our divine Saviour from His birth to His death: from its beginning in the cave of Bethlehem in poverty, ignominy and contempt; following it in the flight to Egypt; contemplating it in the life of humble toil in Nazareth, and during the public-life—when He willingly associated with publicans and sinners, and fled when they would have taken Him to make Him king—till the last scene of all when He

* "The Liturgical Year: Paschal Time," p. 27.

died " glutted with reproaches " (*saturabitur opprobriis*), a slave's death on the Cross, that we shall realize the full meaning of the Incarnation, and of the transformation it was to work in the lives of His followers. Our blessed Saviour, we know by His death on Mount Calvary, entirely satisfied the justice of God ; He could therefore, had He so willed, have restored to man the privileges he enjoyed before the fall. But He chose for him a better way, as the Church, His spouse, recognizes in the words which she puts into the mouth of her ministers in the Office of Holy Saturday : *Felix culpa.* Happy fault ! And it is a cry echoed in the heart of her saints. For by a divine intuition, they have learnt that it is by salvation through the Cross, only, that they can attain to the close union which they have enjoyed with Christ on earth, and to a corresponding degree of glory with Him in the world to come.

And what is true of the saints is true in their measure and degree of all men. Let us give a moment to the consideration of this great truth. For never shall we appreciate the depth and beauty of God's designs until we realize that He has put a chord into the heart of man which vibrates at the touch of the divine Master-hand. Do we not see foremost in man's beliefs, as opposed to his lower instincts, that he is conscious of ideals, whether they concern his country or his gods—no matter which—in whose behalf no sacrifice could be too great ? Have not men at all times borne witness to the fact that a life of self-renunciation, sometimes carried to astounding extremes, as in the case of the Eastern cults, insures a more solid happiness than any imparted by riches and self-indulgence ? St. Francis de Sales, quoting sayings to that effect from Seneca or Epictetus, prefaces them by the words, " I would they had been said by Christian writers," so fully do they accord with the teaching of the Gospel. But however elevated were these sentiments—and the sacred books of the Buddhists, those of ancient Egypt as well as of Greece

and Rome, abound in them—they are vitiated by one fact: they ministered to the pride of man and took their origin from it. Those who practised them likewise were wanting in one thing: the close union with Christ by divine grace which alone gives value to man's thoughts, words and actions, and without which they are worthless.

It is therefore in the light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world; in the beams which irradiate from the divine Infant in the cave of Bethlehem; in the world-embracing light which shines, beacon-like, from the crucified figure on Mount Calvary, that we learn that every step we make to a nearer approach to God, must be accompanied with a corresponding increase of knowledge of our own misery and our utter dependence on Him.

This belief is embodied in a very striking manner in the Holy Rule of the great Patriarch of the West, St. Benedict, in which the twelve steps in the upward ascent of the ladder of humility are minutely laid down for the guidance of his disciples. St. Ignatius, under the heading of the third, or highest degree of humility, places it on a pinnacle where it can only be reached by the exercise of heroic sanctity. From these and all ascetical writers we learn that the progress of a soul in the spiritual life bears an exact proportion to her progress in the virtue of humility. To the graces plentifully imparted by the sacraments of penance and the holy Eucharist, she has been indebted, in the Purgative Way, for seeing the enormity of the sin of pride. But it is due to the example of our divine Saviour and of the presence of the Holy Ghost in her purified soul that on the threshold of the Illuminative Way some glimpse of the beauty of humility, and of the profound truth that it can only be reached by the path of humiliation, is vouchsafed to her. For it was the special promise of Christ to His disciples that the Paraclete would teach them all things, and bring

all things to their minds whatsoever He had told them.

We owe the following striking words to Fr. Wilberforce—commenting on the text, " Every proud man is an abomination to the Lord." The reason he says is, " because humility is truth and pride is utterly untrue. Now God is truth. He must love truth, for in loving truth, He loves Himself : falsehood and deceit of every kind, He must hate as a thing contrary to Himself. When we have genuine humility, we are true, we shine with the light of truth and truth makes us attractive in the eyes of God ; pride on the other hand darkens the soul, deforms it and renders it odious to God. 'Thou hatest all those who work iniquity : Thou wilt destroy all those that speak a lie.' A proud soul is a living lie. It is constantly looking upon itself as good, whereas of itself, it has no good, for ' One is good, God.' It considers its good qualities spring from self, but they belong to God and are the fruits of His grace. It prefers itself to others because it always looks at its own virtues, real or imaginary, and compares them with the defects of others. . . . Where there is no humility there can be no virtue pleasing to God, but only an appearance of virtue, a hollow pretence, hypocrisy. Nothing in His sight is truly great unless done to please Him, and nothing is small and insignificant that is done to give Him glory and to praise Him. The greater and more apparently heroic a thing is, therefore, the more odious is it to Him if done to exalt self and to gain applause. . . . The only way in which we poor, sinful men can become pleasing in the eyes of God, is by becoming conformed to the image of His Son (Ro. viii. 29). In proportion to our likeness to Him, do we become objects of pleasure and delight in the sight of God. If we are unlike Christ and not conformed to His image, we are detestable in God's sight. How can we resemble Him Who humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death ' even the death

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of the Cross' (Phil. ii. 8), except by humility. Humility does make us like Him whose first lesson is 'Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart.'"*

St. Catherine of Siena, when meditating on one occasion on the words, "Wisdom has built herself a house," received this explanation of them from her divine Spouse; "Wisdom," He told her, "has three dwelling places: the bosom of the Eternal Father, Mary's virginal bosom, and that of the humble soul."

But this great truth that humility is the mother and nurse of every virtue, and alone makes the soul pleasing in God's sight, is hidden from the natural man. His eyes have to be supernaturally opened in order that he may grasp it; for all the forces of the world are arrayed on the other side. More than ever is this the case in the days in which we live. For the test of humility is obedience, and when has there ever been such a revolt against authority, whether it be of the ruled against their rulers, wives against their husbands, children against their parents, or, greatest of all revolt, that of so-called Christians against the immutable laws of God, than in our day? No more striking rebuke could He administer to man's pride in an unbelieving generation, than to make use of such humble instruments as Blessed Jean-Baptiste Vianney the Curé d'Ars, of Maria Taigi the Roman peasant, or Bernadette, the confidant of His blessed Mother, in the last century; or of Sœur Thérèse or the humble Visitation nun Benigna Consolata, in this, for the conversion of nations, or to reveal His will to man. In this way does the Almighty and the All-Wise choose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the strong; so that no flesh should glory in His sight.

If pride blinds us to our faults and intercepts the grace of God by means of which we can alone attain to

* "Memorabilia," p. 117.

union with Him, what means should we take to acquire humility ?

Spiritual writers are unanimous in saying that we should ask it of God with fervour and persistence. The blind beggar of Jericho gives us an excellent example in this respect. As Bartimeus had to fight his way through an unfriendly crowd who did their utmost to keep him back from Him who alone could restore his sight, so it is with the Christian soul. There are, however, degress in the blindness of the soul which differentiate it from that of Bartimeus. In one in which pride reigns, with all its hateful brood of kindred vices, the light of the Holy Ghost is extinguished ; she sits in darkness, as the scripture says, and in the shadow of death. For the life of grace is dead within her. But there are others in which the divine Spirit, indeed, resides, but in which He does not reign. He is, as it were, gagged. The crowd, created things, mankind, cares, riches and poverty, all of which were intended by God to lead man to Him, blind him by the wrong use he makes of them, or at least obscure his sight so effectually that he is insensible to the leading and attraction of his divine Guest. " Lord, that I may see," should be our constant cry ; for on our knowledge of how we stand before God depends our progress in the spiritual life, and on our progress depends life eternal.

There are some to whom the word, or idea, of progress in spirituality, is distasteful. They consider that if they are leading a Christian life, keeping the commandments and frequenting the sacraments, that is all that is expected of them. But do they reflect that in spiritual matters " not to proceed is to recede," or as St. Augustine puts it, " Say but ' It is sufficient,' and you are lost. He turns back who finds himself where he was." Why so ? Because every grace we receive, whether through the sacraments or the holy Sacrifice, or by any other means, is intended by our good and

merciful God to draw us nearer to Himself whilst we are *in via*, as well as to contribute to our glory and bliss *in patria*, the home of our eternity. To be wanting in an earnest desire to please God and advance in perfection is to show a fatal tepidity such as we know is hateful in His sight. St. Alphonsus says of a soul without good desires that everything is to be feared for it. "God thirsts to be thirsted for."* He rewards good desires even when they never find issue in action, and prizes them in a manner which is almost a stumbling-block to our little faith and great ignorance —the reason being that He looks to the heart, and His divine and just judgments are founded on what He sees there and what is visible to Him and Him alone. Thus an ancient writer says: "It is not in the light of what we have been, or what we are at the present moment, that our merciful God sees us, but as we would wish to be."

The way therefore by which the Christian soul attains to that closer union with God to which ascetical writers give the name of the Illuminative Life, is that of progress. This progress may be (and often is) compared to physical growth. In childhood man's faculties are undeveloped; but by degrees all necessary measures having been taken to instruct his mind, train his moral nature and feed his body, he attains to perfect manhood.

The sacred writings continually allude to this growth of the soul. St. Paul in his epistle to the Philippians (i. 9), tells them: "I pray that your charity may abound more and more in knowledge and all understanding." And on another occasion, he exhorts the Ephesians (iv. 14) "that doing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up into Him Who is the head, even Christ."

St. Peter's words are equally striking. He beseeches us to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our

* *Sitit sitiri Deus.* St. John Chrysostom.

Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II. Peter iii. 18).

The scenes, therefore, which the soul devoutly contemplates with every recurring year, at Christmas, the Epiphany, and at Easter, the sacraments she receives, every Mass she assists at, if all these actions are performed with love and are accompanied with true compunction of heart, they are as so many steps in an ascent of the ladder of perfection, according to the word of Holy Writ: "Blessed is the man whose help is from thee, in his heart he hath disposed to ascend by steps." One of the first symptoms of spiritual growth, or progress, is that our thoughts and prayers assume a more tender aspect or tone at the thought of God. Our prayer takes more the form of praise and thanksgiving than of petition. We are drawn to "think of God in goodness." The Fatherhood of God, which perhaps before had meant little to us, suddenly becomes a truth of such unspeakable sweetness that it melts us to tears. What is this but the secret indwelling of the Holy Ghost; "because ye are sons, God hath sent the spirit of His Son into your hearts crying Abba Father" (Gal. iv. 6). Again, our interior life, the life we live with God which perhaps till now had been but half grasped, dependent on outward circumstances —nebulous and wavering, has become as real as the one we live with our fellow creatures. Moreover, we begin to feel that it is the only life worth living. All this is the work of grace, that is of the action of the Holy Ghost. And as He leads no two souls alike, He will have a particular message to each one of us. It is on our response to this message, or invitation, that our sanctification depends. "Behold," He says, "I stand at the door and knock. If any man shall hear My voice and open to Me the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me." What is this divine supper to which the Spouse of our souls invites us but a glimpse—even though it should be a

passing one—of sweetness and consolation, in anticipation of the joys that await us hereafter.

St. Teresa encourages the soul to a holy liberty in following God's attraction even though she is as yet a beginner in spiritual matters. Thus, in speaking of one who has not got further than the first two mansions, she says: "From time to time she must give up the contemplation of her own wretchedness, and soar above it in order to gaze on the grandeur and majesty of her God. It is *there* much better than in her self that she will discover her own baseness and that she will find the strength to free herself from the reptiles who have followed her into the first mansions. But however salutary it is (as I have just said) to raise oneself from time to time to the consideration of the greatness of God, even in this she should use prudence, and not seek to dwell always in these heights without ever descending to the consideration of her own nothingness. The knowledge of oneself is so important, that I should wish you never to neglect it, however high the degree of prayer you have reached; for as long as we are in this land of exile nothing is more necessary to us than humility." She then goes on to explain that in the first mansions, souls are more at the mercy of their enemies: "Because they are still full of love of the world, taken up by its pleasures, and passionately desirous of its honours and distinctions; thus the senses and powers which God has given them to use in their defence become enfeebled so that they are easily vanquished. It is not enough for souls at this stage to have a sincere desire to avoid offending God and to give themselves up to good works: they must have frequent recourse to our Lord, and taking His Blessed Mother for their advocate, and the saints for their protectors, they should conjure them to defend them against enemies whom, alone, they are powerless to resist. . . . Still—for such is the happiness enjoyed by souls in the second mansion—they hear the voice of the Saviour

when He calls to them, and, as they penetrate further into the Castle and approach more nearly the King of Glory, they find the benefit of having so good a neighbour. . . . God, in order to make His voice heard in the soul which has reached this stage, makes use of a word dropped by a spiritual person, a sermon, a good book;—not to mention many other means which He also employs, such as infirmities or sufferings, or some truth from which He causes her to draw light when she is engaged in prayer. However wanting in fervour our prayer may be, God attaches great importance to it. . . . Never forget this great truth; for it is one which all who begin to give themselves up to prayer, should keep before them: it is that they must work with all their powers, with courage, and by every means to conform their will to the Will of God. Be well assured that in this consists (as I shall prove to you later) the most sublime perfection to which the soul can attain. The more united the soul is with God, by this entire conformity of will, the more she receives from Him and the more she advances in the ways of perfection. Do not think that our advancement depends on unknown and extraordinary ways. No! all our good consists in a perfect conformity of our will to the Will of God."[1]

St. Teresa returns to the all-important subject of humility when treating of the third mansion of the soul. "It is less by the bodily austerities, which are of secondary importance, than by a profound humility that the soul advances in spirituality. It is the want of humility which stops her from penetrating further into the divine Castle. We must always believe that we have gone but a short way and that our sisters, on the contrary, have advanced much further, and not only should we be desirous of being looked upon as the most imperfect, but we should do all that lies in our power to persuade them that such is the case. Souls who are possessed of these dispositions in the third mansion are in a good way, but if they are wanting she will remain

the rest of her life at the same point, a prey to a thousand pangs and anxieties. Such souls never having the courage to strip themselves of self, and ever bearing the heavy burden of their miseries, are unable to advance ; whilst the souls who have learnt how to vanquish themselves, raise themselves by a liberty which is truly worthy of all praise to the higher abodes in the Castle."

If, as St. Teresa says (and her opinion is shared by all spiritual writers), God attaches such importance to our prayer, even though we are conscious of its being made without much fervour, and seizes the moments we are engaged in it to impart His divine light to our soul, it is clear, that in spite of the trial or aridity or of obstacles of every kind, we should never renounce it. The causes of aridity are nearly always dissipation of mind caused by too great an attachment to the things of this world, or to carelessness about the commission of venial sins, especially sins against charity which of all others are the most displeasing to God. It is an axiom in spiritual matters that "we are never different for long in prayer from what we are out of it." These words may be a useful guide to us if we take them to heart and act upon them. Another saying of the saints is that "he prays little who only prays on his knees." Our divine Saviour no doubt intended us to understand the same thing, when He said we were "always to pray and not to faint." The essence of prayer is the elevation of the heart and soul to God ; and that can be made at any time, in the intervals of work or play, in good health or in bad ; in short at any moment of our waking hours.

St. Thomas says there are four ways in which we can lift up our hearts to God. The first is the elevation of faith by which we raise up our minds to God in praise of His greatness, His omnipotence and His wisdom, which he calls the *elevatio fidei*. The psalms, the models of all vocal prayer, will suggest many thoughts of this

kind to us. What can be more beautiful for instance than the eighteenth psalm :

"The heavens tell of the glory of God
And the firmament declareth the work of His hand.
Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.
They are not speeches nor words, whose voices are not heard.
Unto all the earth their sound hath gone forth,
And their words unto the ends of the world."

A second elevation is that of holy hope and confidence in God's mercy (*elevatio spei*). As we read in the 124th psalm :

"They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Sion. He shall not be moved for ever that dwelleth in Jerusalem. The hills stand round about her ; even so is the Lord round about His people from this time forth for evermore." And again in Jeremias : "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore I have drawn thee, taking pity on thee."

A third is that of a soul elevated to God by the love with which her divine Spouse has inspired her ; and this he calls the *elevatio caritatis*. The Canticle of Canticles says of the divine Lover : "I sleep, but my heart watches : the voice of my beloved knocking, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled, for my head is full of dew, and my locks of the drops of the night." "Such is my beloved and he is my friend" (ch. v.).

The fourth elevation is the *elevatio justitiæ*, when the soul acknowledges God's wisdom and justice, and gives Him homage in such words as these : "Thy justifications were the subject of my song in the place of my pilgrimage." And again, "Thy hands have made me and formed me, give me understanding and I will learn Thy commandments. . . . I am Thine. Save Thou me" (Ps. cxviii.).

There are other signs besides those which we have mentioned, by which spiritual writers would have us see reason to take courage—trusting that we are being led by the Spirit of God. Or, as St. Teresa would say,

that we had advanced far enough into the Castle for the soul to benefit by the closer proximity of "so good a Neighbour." One is that we are making a more determined stand against the three enemies of salvation: (1) sloth in spiritual matters, (2) sensuality, (3) want of Christian charity, or, in other words, breaches of the commandment of which our Lord said it was only second in importance to the first—that of loving our neighbour as ourselves.

Fr. Faber has said of sloth, that when it has gained possession of a soul and become his ruling passion, it is the most difficult of any to eradicate. As a patient under the influence of morphia moves as in a dream, is hardly conscious of the direction in which his steps lead him, so it is with the soul who is a prey to this vice. He prays indeed, or rather he says his prayers, night and morning; but more as a habit, a tribute to conventionality than from any desire he has to praise God, implore His forgiveness or ask His assistance. It is the same with all his other religious duties. His approach to the life-giving sacraments of penance and the Holy Eucharist are as perfunctory as that of a man who pays a visit of ceremony to some grandee, and cuts it as short as he can consistently with politeness. And this carelessness and indifference extends to all his actions. He puts off his religious duties—saying the rosary, or reciting the divine Office or Office of the B.V.M.—if he is in the habit of saying either—till the last possible moment, and then says them without devotion, without any express intention of pleasing God by doing so, simply to get them off his mind. His attendance at Mass is of the same character. There can be no true peace in such a life; nothing of the peace Christ promised His followers. For, as St. Thomas says: "Peace is the tranquillity of order," and how can there be order in the soul of one who habitually, without making any determined effort to shake himself free of the habit, takes the line of the least resistance in his thoughts,

words, and actions? Duties neglected, or postponed and then badly done, are the result; could anything be more opposed to the Holy Spirit, Who loves all things to be done in a befitting manner and in order? To have substituted fervour, or alacrity, for sloth is one of the symptoms by which spiritual writers tell us the soul may recognize the action of divine grace calling her to "go up higher" and enter the Illuminative Way. The second indication is the recognition on her part of the necessity of doing violence to sensuality by the practice of penance.

To deny oneself is the fundamental principle of the Christian religion. By it we know if we are true followers of Jesus crucified. "Penance is required for the senses, the heart and the mind. And this work, which is that of expiation and reparation to God, is done in the senses by mortification, in the heart by self-denial, and in the mind by humility."* Again, Père Tissot says: "When I know how to take and accept purificatory trials in union and in conformity with our Saviour's intention, I complete the work of redemption begun for me but not fulfilled without me." To accept in a spirit of penance the daily trials of life from which human nature is never long exempt: the heat and the cold, the pangs of wounded feelings and bodily pains, and all the other afflictions to which flesh is heir, belongs to the very essence of the spiritual life.

Mother Juliana of Norwich tells us in her Revelations how it was shown specially to her "that we should meekly and patiently bear and suffer that penance that God Himself giveth us with mind of His Blessed Passion," "then we suffer with Him like His friends did that saw it." "Therefore" (He said to her), "I will that thou wisely know thy penance which thou art in continually, and that thou meekly take it for thy penance. And then shalt thou truly see that all this living is penance profitable." She then goes on to explain

* "The Spiritual Life," p. 65.

that " this place is prison and this life a penance ; and that our Lord wishes us to seek and enjoy the remedy. And this is the remedy that our Lord is with us, keeping us and leading us to the fulness of joy ; for as He will be our bliss when we are there, He is our Keeper while we are here : our way, and our Heaven."*

On one occasion only are we told that we give joy to the angels of God, and that is when we are doing penance. Is this not because it is given to these pure spirits to see us such as we are really, sinners one and all, and therefore they rejoice at our eyes being opened to the necessity of anticipating God's just judgments by doing penance both for our own sins and those of our fellow-criminals ? Never let us forget that those heaven-inspired words uttered by the penitent thief apply to each one of us. For in all we suffer, whether our pains are self-inflicted or Providential, we should say : " And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds."

This sense of our brotherhood with all mankind which, as we advance in God's ways, should become more and more the guiding principle of our lives, is a step towards acquiring the third interior disposition of the soul, without which we can never hope to cross the threshold of the Illuminative life : that of love of our neighbour for God's sake.

There are two points of view from which we may look upon the precept that we should love our neighbour as ourselves. The negative and the positive. It had been said, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods ; but human nature needed something more. It needed an example ; it needed an incentive strong enough to cope with that self-love which is part, and the most deep-seated part, of Adam's heritage to his descendants, which bids us return scorn with scorn, hatred with hatred, injury with revenge. Thus, when our Lord came into the world,

* " Revelations of Divine Love," ch. lxxvi.

He found it the prey of all evil passions, and it was when He was about to allow these passions of envy, hatred and malice to be wreaked upon His own innocent person—that of the spotless Lamb of God, Who had come to take away the sins of the world—that He propounded this doctrine to His disciples : " A new commandment I give unto you that you love one another." Thus did He call into play by His Almighty word another master-passion, love, to fight and conquer the one which was devastating the world, that of hatred and revenge. " For love is strong as death. . . . Many waters cannot quench charity, neither can the floods drown it." And it was armed with this divine message of love, with no prestige of learning, or power, or worldly lure to recommend them, that Christ sent out His apostles to take possession of the world in His name. And as with the words, " by this shall all men know you to be My disciples, that you love one another," He made love the supreme test of membership in His society and of union with Him, His apostles began from the first moment of their active mission to carry out His orders. For we read in the Acts of " those that believed " that they had all things in common, and that " they divided their possessions to all according as everyone had need." And this brotherly love, this shining legacy descending from Him " Who died for all men when we were as yet His enemies," shone so brightly in the soul of Stephen, the proto-martyr, that we read that when he was crushed to earth under the stones of his executioners, he cried with a loud voice saying, " Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

The world may say, and say it with truth, that from this point of view, Christianity has failed. Wars still devastate the earth ; murders, the fruit of hatred, cupidity or revenge, fill the prisons ; and how few, even of those who may be looked upon as being the salt of the earth, do not harbour some hidden thoughts which are opposed to the divine precept of love and

goodwill to all men without evasion, excuse, or exception?

We all know the explanation. God the Son, in redeeming the world, put into man's hands the amplest means of salvation; but He did not take away his free-will. "*Butyrem et mel comedat et sciat reprobare malum et eligere bonum.*" He did not force on man a command which, if it was carried out to its fullest extent, would bring about a reign of peace such as the world has never known: a golden age, a millennium. But He bequeathed to His Church, which was one with Him, the Sacrifice and Sacrament of the Eucharist as a perpetual memorial of His love to man; and the Holy Spirit, the embodiment of love, the mutual love of the Father and Son, to be its guide—as well as the guide of every individual member of His Church as long as they are in a state of grace till time should be no more. Therefore though the world, of whom the apostle said, "Whoso shall will to be a friend of the world, is an enemy of God," refuses to accept happiness on God's terms, His children are not only bound to do so, but can be in no delusion about what are these terms. We must love. We must love all men even as God loves them and loves us; we must rely on God's grace to work this change in us which to human nature, unaided, would be impossible. For this supreme and fundamental law of love admits of no half-measures. Nowhere do we find this truth put more forcibly than in St. James's Epistle. "Doth a fountain," he asks, "send forth out of the same hole, sweet and bitter water? But if you have bitter zeal and there be contentions in your hearts, glory not, and be not liars against the truth. For this is not wisdom descending from above, but earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and contention is there is inconstancy and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above first indeed is chaste, then peaceable, modest, easy to be persuaded, consenting to the good, full of mercy and good fruits, without judgment, without

dissimulation" (James iii., 11-17). What a lesson is contained in these words! In the first place, let it be noted how the apostle traces want of charity, of love, to its fountain-head, the heart. There is the seat of evil; there is the source of the bitterness; there the contentions masquerading under the cloak of zeal. And how well he does to warn us against glorying in what should be to us a source of shame, for the end of such glorification is a lie, born of the father of lies. It is in the heart therefore, that we must combat the enemy. For Satan seeks unceasingly to turn the sweet water of love which God puts into the heart, into the bitter water of anger and hatred. He does this by an appeal to our self-love, which is ever ready to resent unkindness, injuries and affronts. What can we do but turn to our crucified Saviour and contemplate His gaping wounds: His Heart opened by a spear which has never ceased loving *us* in spite of our many unkindnesses and wicked ingratitude to Him, and promise for love of Him to forgive everything and everybody with the same love with which He forgives and loves us? And as our mind, our memory is only too ready to join issue with our heart, we must banish from it, at the very first inception, all dwelling on our wrongs, offering them up to God as a most acceptable holocaust in union with the sacrifice which Jesus made for love of us on the Cross. Human nature will often rebel; but as long as sanctifying grace reigns in our soul, the divine Spirit, the Author and Giver of grace is also there. And this blessed Paraclete and Peace-bringer will likewise curb and correct in us the tendency to judge and condemn our neighbour which is no less displeasing to Him and equally opposed to the supreme law of love. For we read in the Scriptures that the Father has committed all judgment to the Son (John v.21), and Jesus Christ Himself tells us that God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world may be saved by Him (John iii. 17). Could there be greater audacity therefore on our part than to

step into the empty judgment-seat and exercise the awful office of judge towards our fellow-men, contrary to the express command of God Himself, without any evidence worthy of the name and frequently misled by prejudice and personal feeling ?*

The mystic, Walter Hilton, gives some very practical and beautiful advice on these subjects. "When thou feelest any motions of wrath, or of anger in thy heart, or any ill-will against thy neighbour for any cause whatsoever, though it seem to thee to be ever so reasonable and not against charity, beware of it, and be ready with thy mind to restrain it, that it may not turn into more complete delight and consent. Resist it as much as thou canst, and follow not after either by word or deed, but as it riseth, smite it down with the sword of the fear of God. . . . And this thou wilt do the better and the more readily if thou be diligent and careful to set thy heart especially on one thing and that is nought else but a spiritual desire of God, how to please Him, to love Him, to know Him, to see Him, and to enjoy Him in some little degree by grace here and to the full in the bliss of Heaven. This desire, if thou keep well to it, will tell thee what is sin and what is not, and what thing is good and what is better; and if thou wilt but fasten thy thoughts to the same desire, it will teach thee all that thou needest. And therefore, whenever thou attackest the root of sin in general, or the root of any particular sin, hang fast to this desire and fix thy thought more upon God Whom thou desirest than upon the sin which thou abhorest. And if thou dost this, then God doth fight for thee and He will destroy sin in thee; and thou wilt much sooner arrive at the end thou hast in view."†

* It is customary in certain Benedictine houses for the religious to make the following prayer daily: "For the glory of God in union with the divine charity of our Lord and in punishment of my past sins, I will try this day to avert my eyes from seeing, my ears from hearing, and my thoughts from condemning my neighbour's actions; and instead I resolve to open my eyes to my own defects and be my own accuser."

† "Scale of Perfection," ch. xii.

The habit of recollection, which has been defined as a double attention to God and our own heart, and which is the outcome of humble and persevering prayer, is the only means of attaining to this "spiritual desire of God" of which the great writer on mysticism speaks. It will also show us what we should do in order to please Him. The service of our neighbour, whether by corporal or spiritual works of mercy, should occupy a foremost place under this heading; for we know that it is not only necessary to avoid evil but to do good. All work done for our neighbour is unspeakably pleasing to our loving and merciful God, and is beautiful in proportion to the love and self-sacrifice we put into it. To see God in our neighbour, as faith teaches us He is—for are we not all members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones?—is the true and sole source of holy charity; by so doing He will count as done for Him all that we do for His suffering members.

The exercise of charity towards our neighbour will also bring many other virtues into play; foremost amongst which is the virtue of patience. We do not think enough of this great virtue of which St. Catherine says that it is the marrow of charity. She describes it thus, "Patience is the queen of the soul. She is seated on the rock of fortitude. She conquers and is never conquered. By her presence, we know whether the garment of charity with which we are clothed is the true nuptial garment or not. If this garment have rents in it, it is an imperfect one and impatience will escape through the rents. The other virtues may be hidden, or may seem to be perfect when in reality they are imperfect; but thou, O patience, canst not be hidden! Let this sweet patience, this marrow of charity, be in the soul, it will prove that all the other virtues are there in great perfection. But if patience be absent, it will show that all the other virtues are imperfect, and not yet united to the holy Cross. Patience is conceived of self-knowledge through the knowledge of God's infinite goodness, is

born of self-hatred and is anointed with true humility. . . . Impatience springs from two causes ; from spiritual death when the soul is in mortal sin, and from imperfection of life when the root of self-love is not destroyed. For if we believed in very truth that everything but sin proceeds from God, and that He wills nothing but what is for our good—a truth we taste in the blood of Christ crucified—and were we not warped in mind by tenderness to ourselves, we should accept whatever God sends us and know that what He sends us is sent in love and for our good. . . . Impatience is the habitual outcome of infidelity to what God ordains for us.* . . . Where shall we find this valiant virtue of patience ? We shall find it where we find charity—in the Blood of Christ crucified, where, amidst the torment of the Cross, no murmur is heard but that of prayer and pardon."†

" My eyes are ever on the Lord ; He will take my feet out of the snares." If we make these words the law of our life, we shall not only tread securely the path of the " proficients " in the spiritual life, but with the grace of God make rapid progress in it.

EASTER-TIDE

The gospel of the Mass on Easter Monday is taken from that of St. Luke (ch. xxiv.) giving the history of the apparition of our Saviour to the disciples on their way to Emmaus.

Here again, as in so many incidents of our Lord's life, we find ample material for the devout contemplation, which is so much recommended to us by spiritual writers. No effort is required to picture to ourselves the scene : the disciples toiling along the road, sad and dispirited ; our Lord joining them and entering into conversation with them.

* Letters, 55. † *Ibid.* 218.

There are two points which should give us food for reflection. We may well ask ourselves in the first place why our Lord should have chosen these two rather than any other of His followers to reveal Himself to them; another is why should He have begun by concealing His person from them.

The answer to the first question is because the minds of the two disciples, "Cleophas and another," were taken up by the thought of their divine Master, so that they could talk of nothing else. "Where thy treasure is there also is thy heart." To talk of Jesus because our heart is full of Him, because it is wrung to see Him forgotten, offended; in short to speak out of the abundance of our heart, whether to kinsfolk or friends, is to do something very pleasing to Him and which will bring down many graces upon us.

The answer to the second point is that as long as we are in this world, we shall always have to live by faith. "Truly Thou art a hidden God," the inspired writer exclaims, "O God, our Saviour!" "Thou hidest thyself, O divine lover," we may say, "in order to draw from us acts of faith and confidence; in order that we may seek Thy Face and so merit from Thee an eternal reward."

In the reproach Jesus makes to His disciples, we have also much to learn; "O foolish and slow of heart," He says to them. And then He enlightens their ignorance by expounding the Scriptures to them. So will it ever be with us. If we rely on our human reasoning, we shall continually find ourselves at fault. And yet what is more common than to hear people—even those who ought to know better—arraign the Providence of God or His Church before a tribunal of which they constitute themselves judges, forgetting the warning, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor your ways my ways?" Let us then ever turn to Him in our difficulties, and implore Him to send His Spirit, the divine Paraclete, the Comforter, to clear up our doubts and bring peace to our souls. And as we have no right to expect miracles,

if this does not avail us, let us take advice of His Church which is one with Him, and so set them at rest.

But it is in the touching conclusion of this beautiful story that we shall find food for those acts of love, confidence, and adoration by which we attract the heart of our God and bring down His grace. For we read, "And they drew nigh to the town whither they were going, and he made as though he would go farther. But they constrained him, saying, 'Stay with us because it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent!' And he went in with them. And it came to pass whilst he was at table with them, he took bread and blessed and brake and gave to them. And their eyes were opened and they knew him and he vanished out of their sight."

"They constrained Him,;" so should we ever do to our dearest Lord. For He behaves ever as a timid guest, not sure of His welcome. We must constrain Him with the profound humility of our bearing—owning that we are utterly unworthy of His favours. "I am not worthy of being Thy son, make me one of thy hired servants," should be the cry of our hearts. And we should plead with Him "*quoniam advesperascit*," for whether young or old, it is always but evening, and the night approaching, unless He, the true Sun of Justice, sheds his light on our souls. And He will assuredly, sooner or later, reveal Himself to us and not take leave of us without having blessed us.

In the epistle and gospel of Easter Tuesday, the same glorious truth of the Resurrection of our divine Saviour is taught and dwelt upon. In the Acts of the Apostles, St. Paul says, "And we declare unto you that the promise which was made to our fathers this same God hath fulfilled to our children, raising up Jesus Christ our Lord" (Acts, ch. xiii.).

In the gospel, which is from that of St. Luke (ch. xxiv.), we read of what seems to us the astounding hesitancy of the disciples in accepting the truth of His Resurrec-

tion. Again, as with the two going to Emmaus, He has "to open their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures," thus demonstrating (what, indeed, common sense should teach us), that no book, not even the inspired one, can avail us with regard to the truths necessary for salvation, unless they are interpreted by Him Who inspired it, or by one authorized to do so by Him.

The epistle of the Wednesday in Easter week is taken from the Acts of the Apostles (ch. iii.). Again do we read the proclamation to the men of Israel by St. Peter, of the glorious news of the Resurrection. How "the author of life you killed," has been "raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses." And how touching the promises he makes to them in the name of his crucified Master: "I know that you did it through ignorance, as did also your rulers. . . . Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."

In the gospel (John, ch. xxi.) we are given the story of Christ's third apparition to His disciples on the shores of the sea of Tiberius. Peter and some of his companions were fishing when "Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples knew not that it was Jesus." They had caught nothing, but at His word, they cast down their net, and then "they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes." Even then it seems as if their eyes were held. But St. John said to Peter: "It is the Lord," and Simon Peter when he heard that it was the Lord, girt his coat about him (for he was naked) and cast himself into the sea."

"Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." It is by keeping our heart pure from earthly attachments, and above all from attachment to sin, even venial ones, that we shall be consoled by the vision of our Lord. Not, indeed, as He was, glorious and transfigured, on Mount Thabor, or even in His beautiful humanity, as the disciples saw Him on the shores of Galilee, but

in the inmost recesses of our heart. There He will reveal Himself to the pure and faithful soul who watches for Him (as the Psalmist sings) from the dawn of day, "*Deus Deus meus, ad te de luce vigilo.*" He will speak to her sometimes in tenderest accents. At another time He will open her eyes to her sins and infidelities, spreading them out as in a scroll before her. But whether it is in love or in gentlest reproof, she will recognize Him, and say with the beloved disciple "*Dominus est.*" "It is the Lord."

The blessing of the *Agnus Dei* takes place on Wednesday in Easter week. The ceremony is performed by the Pope on the first, and every seventh year afterwards of his pontificate. There are traces of the custom in the Church's liturgy as far back as the seventh century. The words of the blessing, which are very striking and significant, make constant reference to the sacrifice of the most innocent Lamb of God for the sins of mankind—invoking in a special manner God's blessing on the catechumens, to each of whom an *Agnus Dei* was presented on the following Saturday. The protection of God is also asked on all who wear them from "fire, and lightning, and tempests," and that they should be "a safeguard to mothers in the pains of child-birth." The Agnus Dei on account of its sublime symbolism, of having been blessed by the Sovereign Pontiff, and the solemnity of the rite used, is considered one of the most venerated objects of Catholic piety.*

On Thursday in Easter week, the Church puts before us the history of the miraculous interposition of divine Providence for the conversion of the eunuch, a "man of great authority under Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians" (Acts, ch. viii.). This epistle, like so many other passages from the Scriptures at this time, was intended especially for the catechumens. The ignorance of the Ethiopian who, though he had the word of Scripture,

* "Liturgical Year: Paschal-time," p. 262.

knew not in what sense to understand it; the docility with which he accepted its interpretation from Philip, the man sent to him by God; finally the promptitude with which he corresponded with the grace of God, and the faith that was given him, were all so many incentives to the newly-baptized Christians to respond to the graces of their conversion, and to act up to them in a similar spirit.

In the epistle for Friday in Easter week, which is taken from that of St. Peter (I., ch. iii.), he compares baptism to the ark of Noah where a few souls were saved by water, "Whereunto baptism being of the like form saveth you also; not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the examination of a good conscience towards God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Who is on the right hand of God." In the Resurrection of our Saviour, the culminating proof of His divinity, the Prince of Apostles saw the foundation of faith, and of the Christian Church. And the gospel (Matt. ch. xxviii.) accentuates this doctrine—giving our Lord's parting words to the Apostles. "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth; going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold, I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world."

Saturday in Easter week was the last day in which the neophytes wore their baptismal garments; the Church in the epistle using the words of St. Peter (I., ch. ii.) addresses herself particularly to them, bidding them: "Lay aside all malice and all guile and dissimulation, and envies and all detractions, as new-born babes desire the rational milk without guile, that thereby you may grow into salvation . . . be you also as living stones built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

The gospel (John, ch. xx.) tells how Mary Magdalen having gone early to the sepulchre, found the stone taken away, and returned to tell Peter and the disciple Jesus loved, that the body of the Lord was not there; and how they going, found how it was as she said, and John following Peter, "Saw and believed; for as yet they knew not the scripture that He must rise again from the dead."

LOW SUNDAY

This Sunday, the first after Easter, is also called Quasimodo Sunday from the first words of the introit.

Quasi modo geniti infantes, Alleluia, Alleluia, rationabile sine dolo lac concupiscite. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

As new-born babes, Alleluia, Alleluia, desire the rational milk without guile. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Ps. Exultate Deo adjutori nostro: Jubilate Deo Jacob.

Ps. Rejoice to God our helper: sing aloud to the God of Jacob.

What a glorious note of triumph resounds in the epistle for this day! (John i., ch. v.). "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" The beloved disciple who wrote these words under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost had himself witnessed the death of Jesus on the Cross. To all appearance Christ's mission had been a ghastly failure. The world, the forces of evil, had triumphed. Even those who loved him best, Peter, John, the Magdalene despaired. The evidence of the senses was too strong for them; their faith failed before it. Who better than he, therefore, could speak of the victory of faith who had beheld with his own eyes first the destruction of his hopes, and then their glorious fulfilment; who had witnessed the Resurrection of the Son of man, immortal and im-

passible, followed by His Ascension into Heaven. And what an encouragement for us. Why should we shrink from failure or suffer from discouragement in God's service? There can be no failure to those who are born of God in holy baptism and armed with divine faith. To the world we may seem to have failed, as Christ failed and His martyrs failed, but the crown of victory will be ours as it was theirs.

The gospel for Low Sunday is taken from that of St. John (ch. xx.), in which we read how our Lord appeared to His apostles "the doors being shut," and of His gentle rebuke to the incredulous Thomas after He had shown him the wounds in His hands and in His side: "Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and have believed."

The Holy Ghost had not yet descended on the apostles. Human nature was still strong in them: consequently a spirit of *pride*, which hindered them from accepting, in its full significance, the gracious message sent to them through Magdalen, "Go to my brethren and say to them I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and your God." It was the same instinctive pride—which is at the root of all evil—which prevented Thomas submitting his reason and intellect to what he was told on the authority of Peter and John and the rest of the apostles. The grace of God, however, enabled him to make full reparation for his incredulity in the glorious confession of faith made by him in the words, "My Lord and my God!" Accordingly St. Gregory says: "We are more helped by St. Thomas' incredulity than by Magdalen's prompt belief." Amongst the relics of St. Thomas which, after his glorious martyrdom, were collected by the faithful and are now preserved in Rome and exposed for veneration on his feast, is the finger which our Lord guided and put into His side to prove that it was in truth He who had risen from the dead.

Among the feasts of saints which the Roman martyrology commends to our devotion for the month of April is that of St. Vincent Ferrer, which occurs on the 5th. He was born in 1351 and belonged by birth to "the most Catholic country," Spain. In his eighteenth year, he was professed as a monk of the Rule of St. Dominic, and after devoting three years to arduous study of the Bible, he began his apostolic mission. His success was so great among the Jews of his native city of Valencia, that he emptied the synagogue and it was converted into a church. He suffered so intensely from the terrible scandals which afflicted the Church on account of the divisions in men's minds consequent on the great schism, that his life was despaired of. When in this state Christ appeared to him and told him to go forth and convert sinners, for: "My judgment is nigh." He got up, cured, and started at once to carry out his Master's orders. For twenty-one years, he traversed Europe, preaching wherever he went—in Italy, France, Switzerland, England, Scotland, and Ireland; and though he knew no language but his own, he was perfectly understood by all those to whom he brought the message of the Gospel. Innumerable conversions followed his words of fire; sinners were reformed, heretics and infidels submitted to the true Church; astounding miracles attested his God-given mission. Amidst all these labours nothing distracted him from his interior union with God; and whilst his days were spent in preaching and hearing confessions his nights were given over to prayer. The fear of God and of His just judgments were the subjects on which all his discourses turned, whence he was known as the Angel of Judgment. He died in 1419.

The feast of St. Leo the Great is kept on April 11th. He was born in Rome and was made an archdeacon of the Roman Church by St. Celestine. After the death of that Pontiff's successor Sixtus, he was elected to the Papal throne. Great were the trials and vicissi-

tudes which beset this glorious successor of St. Peter during his rule of twenty years. They came from within and without. The Eutychean heresy, which exalted the divine nature of the Son of God at the expense of the human, had gained many adherents, especially in the Eastern Church. Leo summoned the General Council of Chalcedon, at which he expounded with such eloquence and precision the doctrine held by the Catholic Church in refutation of the errors of Eutyches, that the Fathers pronounced a unanimous condemnation of them, saying: "Peter has spoken by the mouth of Leo." No sooner had the internal peace of the Roman Church been secured, than the advance of Attila, "the Scourge of God," at the head of a huge army of barbarians to the gates of the eternal City, brought consternation to its inhabitants. Undaunted by the foe, Leo went out to meet him, and by his calm dignity and persuasive words induced Attila to turn back and spare the city and its inhabitants. It is said that whilst Leo was speaking, Attila saw standing beside him the figure of St. Peter with a drawn sword in his hand as if defending his city, and that the barbarian leader lost heart on seeing himself opposed to a supernatural enemy. St. Leo enriched the Church by his writings and by his learned and brilliant homilies on the Gospel. He died in the year 461.

The feast of St. Anselm—one of the most distinguished of the occupants of the See of Canterbury, for piety and learning—is kept on April 21st. He was born in the middle of the eleventh century and was a native of Piedmont, and became a monk in the monastery of Bec in Normandy. His reputation for holiness caused him to be sent for to attend William Rufus as confessor when he was lying sick in the neighbourhood of Bec; and later on he was named, through the influence of that monarch, to the See of Canterbury. In that position, he endured constant persecution and opposition; first from his royal patron, who began by

refusing him permission to go to Rome to receive the pallium (an order which Anselm was bound to disobey), and on his death, he met with similar treatment from his successor, Henry I. For his defence of the rights of the Church against the royal encroachments which aimed at minimizing the spiritual jurisdiction of the Holy See, he was forced to go for a time into exile, though in the end he—or rather his cause—triumphed. One of his characteristics was his tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and his advocacy of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. He was the first to establish a feast in honour of it in the West. He was a prolific writer, and the distinguished mark of his sermons and treatises was an ardent love of God. The following came from his pen :

" I cannot express, O my God, how happy thy elect will be ; certainly they will rejoice according to the measure of their love and they will love according to the measure of their knowledge. But how great will be their knowledge and how great their love ! Certainly no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered in this life into the heart of man to understand how much they will know and love Thee in the world to come. I beseech Thee, O God, that I may know Thee, love Thee, rejoice in Thee ; and if I cannot do so perfectly in this life, that I may at least advance from day to day until I arrive at this perfection. Let my knowledge of Thee progress *here*, and be perfect *there ;* let my love increase here, and be perfect there, that my joy may be great in hope here and perfect in possession there. O Lord, Thou dost bid us and counsel us to ask through Thy Son and dost promise that our joy will be full. I beseech Thee then, O true and faithful God, grant that our joy may be complete. May, in the meantime, my soul consider it, my tongue speak of it, my heart love it. May my spirit hunger for it, my flesh thirst for it, my whole being desire it : until I enter into the joy of the Lord—who as the Triune God

be blessed for ever. Amen."* St. Anselm died in the year 1109.

The feast of St. George, the patron saint of England, is kept on the 23rd. He was a native of Cappadocia and lived at the end of the third century. All that is known of him is that he was a soldier, held a distinguished rank in Diocletian's army and suffered martyrdom during the reign of that monarch. He was the object of an enthusiastic cultus in the East, where he was honoured with the title of "the great Martyr." Thence sprang up many legends descriptive of his prowess, his victories over the powers of evil, and his dauntless bravery. His renown spread outside Europe, and to the name given him of the "white-horsed Knight" by the Saracens, is ascribed the tradition that he has appeared more than once in battle in the world's history, mounted on a white charger. He seems to have been specially invoked by the Crusaders, and many instances were given by them of his protection in the field. Devotion to him in this country is said to date back to the 9th century, and at a Council held in Oxford in 1222, it was decreed that his feast should be kept as a holiday of obligation. The Order of the Garter, the highest England has in her power to give, was dedicated to his name in 1330 by Edward III., and the war-cry of "St. George for England" was one which made itself heard in many a hard-fought field as long as England was true to the ancient faith.

The feast of St. Mark the Evangelist takes place on April 25th. He was the beloved disciple of St. Peter, who, in his first epistle to the Churches of Asia, joins the salutation of "my son Mark" (as he affectionately styles him) to his own. St. Mark accompanied his august patron to Rome, and acted there as his secretary and interpreter. His gospel was written in succession to that of St. Matthew, and under the eye of the Prince of the Apostles. The account given in his gospel of

* Anselm, in Proslog.

St. Peter's fall is more detailed than that given by the other Evangelists, and there are other slight incidents which show the acquaintance of an eye-witness, or of one writing under the guidance and on the authority of an eye-witness. St. Mark was first sent by St. Peter to found the Church of Aquileia, and later on to Alexandria, where his preaching bore astounding fruit; the Church of Alexandria being looked upon later as the second See of Peter and the second Church of Christendom. Here he instituted a monastic Order, to which the name of the Therapeutes was given, so that St. Jerome speaks of him as the "Father of the Anchorites." He was also the first to set up hospitals and schools. The Christian School of Alexandria gained a great name from the learning and piety of its scholars. He met with martyrdom from the hands of the priests of Serapis. His name was held for a great number of centuries in special veneration in Venice, and the "Lion of St. Mark," is still the pride of its citizens; the lion being the special emblem of the great Evangelist—the name having been given him on account of his gospel beginning with the mission of the Baptist, the great Precursor, of whom it was said that, like the roar of the lion, his voice was as "one crying in the desert."

The feast of St. Catherine of Siena is kept on the 30th of April. In the life of no other of God's servants is the doctrine of the Communion of Saints illustrated in a more striking manner. She seems to have been raised up by God as one who was to "set up a hedge and stand in the gap before God, in favour of the land that He might not destroy it." To form her for this great mission, our divine Saviour placed her in an interior novitiate (as her confessor, B. Raymond, writes), in which He was pleased Himself to be her Novice-Master. The great truth He put before her, one on which He willed that the whole of her spiritual life should be based, was that of the greatness of God and the nothingness of man. "Knowest thou, O daughter," He said to her,

" who thou art and who I am ? Thou art she who art not, and I am He Who Am." Her parents, who were of humble birth, wished her to marry and when she refused, having consecrated her virginity to God, they subjected her to much hard treatment. But while her hands were occupied, her soul was interiorly united to God, for her divine Spouse had taught her to make a cell there, and nothing distracted her from the contemplation of Him Who had made it His abode. At fifteen years of age, she entered the Third Order of St. Dominic, and the fame of her sanctity, her visions, and the astoundingly supernatural life she led before long spread outside the confines of her native city of Florence, and attracted many devout persons, both men and women, to put themselves under her direction. The times she lived in were stormy to an almost unparalleled extent. Every state and town in Italy was engaged in warfare one with another. And Rome, deserted by the Vicars of Christ, who had established their court at Avignon, was a prey to factions. Acting as a humble instrument in the hands of God, backed up by no power or influence, she, and three members of her company, crossed the Alps and, arriving at the Papal Court, asked for an interview with Gregory XI. He granted it, and Catherine then gave him the message God had ordered her to deliver ; and when he hesitated, she reminded him of a vow he had made (which was known to no one but himself) to return to Rome. Finally, the saint's entreaties and the grace of God prevailed, and Gregory returned to the Eternal City. He died in the following year and was succeeded by Urban VI. The election was made hurriedly in dread of a popular rising, and some of the cardinals protested and set up an anti-pope in opposition to Urban. Again the saint threw herself heart and soul into the cause, defending the true Vicar of Christ, for such she deemed Urban, against his opponent. The last six months of her life were spent in Rome—expiating in her own person, by a martyrdom

of pains, physical and supernatural, the disorders and scandals to which these dissensions gave rise. Her last words to her spiritual children were : " Hold for certain that in departing from the body, I in truth have consumed and given my life in the Church and for the Church, which thing is a most special grace for me." She gave up her blessed soul to God in 1380 in the thirty-third year of her age. Her spiritual letters and the treatise called " The Dialogue " are a treasury of beautiful and devout thoughts, and the Church has pronounced her doctrine to be " infused not acquired."

EASTER-TIDE (*continued*)

Our Lord delayed His glorious Ascension to Heaven for forty days, in order, the Church leads us to believe, to strengthen the faith of His disciples and to instruct them in the divine knowledge necessary for the task which He was about to confide to them of going to teach all nations. What days of joy these must have been to them, as they listened to His words and contemplated His sacred wounds, with the thought ever before them, " He loved *me* and delivered Himself up for me !"

St. Bernard, in one of his sermons, speaks very beautifully of the confidence with which Christ's wounds should inspire us. " Where can I," he says, " that am weak, find rest and security but in the wounds of Jesus ? The greater is His power to save, the surer am I in my dwelling there. The world denounces me, the body weighs me down, the devil sets snares for me, but I shall not fall, for my feet are on a rock. I have sinned grievously ; my conscience troubles me indeed, but it does not drive me to despair, for I remember the wounds of my Saviour. Yes, He was wounded for our iniquities (Is. ch. liii.). What I have not of my own, I take from the Heart of Jesus, for it is overflowing with mercy. They have pierced His hands and His feet (Ps. xxi.) and

with a spear they have opened His side, enabling me through those clefts, to suck honey out of the rock and to taste and see how sweet is the Lord (Ps. xxxiii.). . . . The secret of His Heart is revealed by His wounds, the great mystery of mercy is revealed, 'the bowels of the mercy of our God in which the Orient from on high hath visited us' (Luke ch. i.). What, O Lord, could show me more clearly than do Thy wounds that Thou art sweet and mild and plenteous in mercy?"

We may dwell on the thought of the risen Body of our divine Saviour from many points of view. St. Paul presents it to us principally from that of its being the grounds of our hopes in a glorious immortality. For him, eternal life and eternal happiness simply mean participation in Christ's resurrection, "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection" (Phil. ch. iii.). "This, then, is the essentially Christian attitude of mind with regard to our future life; a keen love, and profound grasp of the great dogma of Christ's resurrection. It gives wonderful definiteness to all our hopes and aspirations. It makes the Son of God the end of all our longings. Our eternity is merely the participation in Christ's risen life. No words could be a better conclusion to these considerations than Christ's own confident and unequivocal assertion in His last prayer, 'Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me, may be with Me: that they may see My glory which Thou hast given Me, because Thou hast loved Me before the creation of the world'"* (John ch. xvii.).

The name of Good Shepherd Sunday is given to the Second Sunday after Easter on account of the epistle and gospel, in both of which the faithful are bidden to look upon Christ under that figure. In these passages from the New Testament, as in so many others, we see our Lord recalling to our minds, and at the same time fulfilling, words spoken of him prophetically by

* "The Christian Mind," pp. 119, 125, by Abbot Vonier.

David in the psalms, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want; He hath set me in a place of pasture."

In the epistle, St. Peter (I., ch. ii.) tells us to look upon our divine Saviour first as our example that we should walk in His steps: "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Who when he was reviled did not revile, when he suffered, he threatened not, but delivered himself to him that judged him unjustly; who his own self bore our sins in his body upon the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live to justice, by whose stripes you were healed." In these touching words, St. Peter seems to wish us to see in our divine Saviour the Lamb of God, He who took away the sins of the world. But in the concluding verse, he puts Him before us as our shepherd, "For you were as sheep going astray, but you are now converted to the shepherd and bishop of your souls." St. Teresa makes some very apposite remarks on this two-fold character under which our Lord is represented; she says, "St. John saw this divine Shepherd as a lamb in the midst of His sheep governing them, and guiding them through green and pleasant pastures as He led them to the fountains of the water of life. Oh, how sweet it is to see the shepherd become a lamb! He is a shepherd because He feeds us, and a lamb because He is our food. He is a shepherd because He supports His sheep and a lamb because He is Himself the support with which He supplies them. When, therefore, we ask Him to give us daily our super-substantial food, it is the same as if we were to beg our Shepherd that He would Himself become our food and our nourishment."

In the gospel, which is taken from that of St. John (ch. x.), our Lord proclaims Himself the Good Shepherd, and then gives the unanswerable proof of His right to the title—because "the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep." We should allow these words, by meditation and prayer, to sink deeply into our hearts. For how can we doubt of God's love of us, of the way He

legislates and provides for us down to the minutest detail in His watchful care of us when we remember that He has given us this culminating proof of His love? And what an appeal is contained in those words, "And other sheep I have that are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." As He identifies our interests with His (for is not the good and the well-being of the sheep likewise the good of the shepherd?) so He wishes us to make His interests ours. How can we better do so than by praying, working and suffering for the conversion of sinners and those outside the fold. All are His; He loves them with an everlasting love and has died to redeem them. They are made to His image and likeness, and—as He has revealed to some of His saints—He would gladly suffer all the pains of His Passion and death again to save them from eternal misery. But though He has redeemed man without his concurrence, He will not save man without it—for He leaves to every man his free-will. But He has confided to us, His sheep who know Him and "hear His voice," to employ every effort in our power by our influence, our example and in a hundred other ways, to bring them into the true fold, the fold of Peter, to whom His divine Master committed His sheep before returning to heaven. Our Saviour's answer to His Blessed Mother, when she asked Him to work a miracle, was: "My time has not yet come." And yet, in spite of this, He could not find it in His heart to refuse her. So it will be with us. If our love for Him, and for those "other sheep" whom He loves, is ardent and self-sacrificing, He will assuredly hasten His time to the joy of all the angels of Heaven, and to our own great good and eternal reward.

One more thought is suggested to us by the lessons put before us by holy Church on this Sunday, in which she directs our attention to words uttered by our Lord during His public life speaking of Himself as the Good Shepherd. We know that Christ habitually used alle-

gorical language when He spoke to His own chosen disciples as well as to the multitude ; and that in this He conformed to the language, and ways of thought of the Orientals. It is the same in the ancient scriptures, where man is continually described under a figure, where he is likened to a hart athirst for running waters, or as a solitary sparrow on the house-top, and so forth. But there is one metaphor to which the inspired writers return again and again in speaking collectively of the human race, and which our Lord adopted in such a marked manner that we cannot doubt that He intended that we should see a special meaning in it. That is the comparison of Himself to a good shepherd, and His Church to a flock of sheep.

It would not be assuming too much to say that if anyone was asked what was the special characteristic of sheep, he would answer stupidity : the stupidity that is implied by following a leader without choice and intelligence. Would it not appear therefore that our divine Saviour took the risk (if we may reverently say so) of this stigma being attached to His followers because of the paramount importance which He assigned to emphasizing certain characteristics which He wished to be those of His Church to all time ? The first of these is union. Sheep must keep together under the guardianship of a shepherd, or they are no longer a flock. Also the straggler, the sheep who separates itself from the flock, attracted by some enticing herbage, or strays into forbidden pasture, is exposed to the risk of being caught in brambles, or becoming an easy prey to wolf or wandering cur. In short its safety lies in obedience and submission. The sheep has also its personal characteristics, as well as those which it displays in its collective capacity : sheep do not fight for the best bit of ground ; they use neither tooth nor claw in attack or defence. Meekness and patience are their most marked characteristics. Now all these marks in the moral order are precisely

those which Christ strove by word and example to impress on His followers. The parallel between the Church He founded and a flock in which all the sheep follow one shepherd is so clear that it seems hardly necessary to insist upon it. Heresies, that is division in the flock, which sprang up in the very earliest days of the primitive Church, were denounced in the strongest terms by the apostles, even by the loving and tender-hearted St. John. The heretic,* according to Tertullian, is condemned by the very fact of his choosing for himself, since a Christian has no such liberty of choice, but is bound to receive the doctrine which the apostles received from Christ; or from the Church founded by Him on the rock, Peter. This is Faith; a divine gift, which man cannot merit by his own exertions or his mental gifts, but which God gives to those who ask it of Him humbly and perseveringly. "And yet," as Newman says, "so far are those outside the fold from taking this view that they cast ridicule upon it. That is they laugh at the bare notion of doing what Christians undeniably did in the time of the apostles. Observe, they do not ask whether the Catholic Church has a claim to teach, has authority, has the gifts; no, they think that the very state of mind which such a claim involves in those who admit it, the disposition to accept without reserve or question, is slavish."† In other words, it is that of the sheep of Christ's flock, who know their Shepherd and trust Him and whom He knows. And the disposition which leads to this obedience and submission is absolutely opposed to the natural man. It can only be learned at the feet of Jesus. Pilate, when at his orders Christ was led forth crowned in mockery by His tormentors with the mimic sceptre of a reed in His hand, said,

* Heresy (according to Professor Schleusner) signifies choice or option between two alternatives; a sect, or body of men who choose for themselves, embrace and follow the doctrine of some teacher or particular mode of life in preference to others, either in a good or bad sense.

† "Discourses delivered to mixed congregations," Cardinal Newman, p. 207.

"Behold the man." Behold—each one may say to his own heart—thy Model. Behold in the Son of God those virtues which He desired thee to learn of Him, humility, meekness, forgiveness of injuries. The world may despise thee as it despised thy Master, but have confidence. He has said, "I have overcome the world."

The epistle of the Third Sunday after Easter is taken from the book of Genesis (xlix.), and bears reference to the holy patriarch St. Joseph. We read in it the glorious prophecy of Jacob with regard to his son Joseph —of whom he says: "The blessings of thy father are strengthened with the blessings of his fathers, until the desire of the everlasting hills shall come; may they be upon the head of Joseph, and upon the crown of the Nazarite among his brethren."

The gospel is taken from St. John (ch. xvi.). Our divine Saviour was about to take leave of His disciples, and "knowing His hour had come" He sought to prepare them for the separation. We also may take heart from His loving words, for we, even more than they, have to live by faith. And our faith will be put to many trials before we reach our eternal Home. But to us also He says: "You now indeed have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you."

Wednesday following the Third Sunday after Easter is dedicated to the Patronage of St. Joseph. The devotion to this great saint began in the Eastern Church and spread thence to the Western. It was so little practised in Spain in the sixteenth century that it may be said to have been first introduced there by St. Teresa, who dedicated the first convent of the Reform to St. Joseph. The striking words which she uses in her Life regarding the efficacy of prayer to the saint no doubt helped to spread devotion to him, not only in her Order, but among her countrymen. Though they are well known, they bear repeating: "I cannot call to mind

that I have ever asked him at any time for anything which he has not granted, and I am filled with amazement when I consider the great favours which God has given me through this blessed saint; the dangers from which he has delivered me, both of body and mind. To other saints our Lord seems to have given grace to succour men in some special necessity; but to this glorious saint, I know by experience to help us in all. And our Lord would have us understand that as He was Himself subject to him on earth (for St. Joseph having the title of father and being His guardian, could command him), so now in Heaven he performs all his petitions."

A hundred years later, the same office of spreading devotion to this saint—this time in France—was performed by Fr. Jacquinot, a member of the Society of Jesus. In his book, "The Glory of St. Joseph," he uses words which are nothing less than prophetic. Speaking of the prophecies of the saints, he says "they have announced that in the latter ages of the world the glories of St. Joseph will be brought to light; that God will draw aside the veil which has hitherto prevented us from seeing the wondrous sanctuary of Joseph's soul; that the Holy Ghost will inspire the faithful to proclaim the praises of this admirable saint, and to build monasteries, churches, and altars in his honour; that throughout the entire kingdom of the Church militant, he shall be looked upon as a special protector—for was he not the protector of the very founder of that kingdom, namely, our Lord Jesus Christ? And that the Sovereign Pontiffs will, by a secret impulse from Heaven, ordain that the feast of this great patriarch be solemnly celebrated through the length and breadth of the spiritual domain of St. Peter."*

The last words of the holy Jesuit were fulfilled in September, 1847, when Pope Pius IX. issued an apostolic

* "Gloire de St. Joseph," Père J. Jacquinot, S.J.

decree causing the feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph to be kept throughout Christendom.

The Church authorizes, and encourages by many indulgences, various devotions to St. Joseph; the one best known and most widely practised is that of his seven sorrows and seven joys. They are the following:

1. The sorrow with which he became aware that the Blessed Virgin was about to be a mother, and the joy he experienced when the angel announced to him the mystery of the Incarnation.

2. The sorrow he felt when he saw the divine Infant born in the cold and squalor of the stable of Bethlehem, and the joy when he heard the angels sing His praises.

3. The sorrow when he saw the blood of the Child Jesus shed in the circumcision, and the joy when he heard Him given a name which was to be a joy to mankind for all successive generations.

4. The sorrow he felt when he heard from Simeon's prophecy that the blessed Mother's heart would be pierced by a sword, and the joy when he was told that the divine Child was raised up for the salvation and resurrection of many.

5. The anguish he endured when the angel told him to take the child and His mother and flee into Egypt, and the joy when he saw the pagan gods falling prostrate in homage to the presence of the Son of God.

6. The fear when returning to Judea, he knew not if the tyrant Archelaus was still alive, and the joy when he was told in sleep that the danger was removed and that he might return to Nazareth in peace with Jesus and His blessed Mother.

7. The anguish that filled his heart and that of his blessed spouse when they lost the Child Jesus, and the joy when they found Him again in the Temple.

St. Joseph is the patron of a happy death; for what could have been a more blessed one than his, dying as

he did, in the presence of Jesus and Mary ? The Wednesdays of the year have by long usage been specially consecrated by the faithful to devotion to this holy patriarch. Many also of those who are in the habit of saying the Office of our Lady add the following liturgical prayer to her holy Spouse at the conclusion of Lauds :

> Fidelis servus et prudens quem constituet Dominus suæ matris solatium, suæ carnis nutritium, et solum in terris magna consili coadjutorum fidelissimum.
>
> V. Ecce homo sine querela verus Dei cultor.
>
> R. Abstinens se ab omne opera malo et permanens in innocentia sua.

ORATIO

> Sanctissimæ Genetrices tuæ sponsi, quæsumus Domine meritas adjuvemur, ut quod possibilitas nostra non obtinet, ejus nobis intercessione donetur : qui vivis et regnas in sæcula sæculorum. Amen.

The epistle for the Fourth Sunday after Easter is taken from that of St. James (ch. i.) in which he dwells on the immutability of the Creator, and the crime and folly of man when he anticipates God's judgments. For " let every man be swift to hear but slow to speak and slow to anger. For the anger of man worketh not the justice of God."

In the gospel (John, ch. xvi.) holy Church puts before us the words spoken by our divine Saviour after the Last Supper, in which He foretold to His disciples the coming of the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth Who, when He came, would teach them all truth. These words which contain a solemn promise of the Son of God to His Church that henceforth they should be preserved from error and " taught of God " are further emphasized in the anthem at the Communion :

" When the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth shall come, He will convince the world of sin and of justice and of judgment. Alleluia. Alleluia."

The epistle of the Fifth Sunday after Easter, like that of the last, is taken from that of St. James (ch. i.). In very noteworthy words, the blessed apostle speaks of the " law of liberty," which, as St. Paul likewise teaches, is the glorious possession of the followers of Christ. But he goes on to warn them this does not mean that they are to be forgetful hearers, " but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. And if any man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Religion clean and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."

In what complete harmony are these words of St. James with our Blessed Lord's teaching! For whilst He found fault with the rigorism of the Pharisees, by not so much as a word does He lend support to the antinomian doctrines advanced by the Reformers in the sixteenth century, which split up the Church and robbed her of so large a portion of her inheritance. For what could be stronger than the words He spoke to His disciples at the Last Supper, when He told them that love, e.g., charity, was to be the test of their fellowship with Him? or than the great teaching conveyed by the gospel regarding the Last Judgment, when an eternal doom of reward or punishment is made to turn on works of active charity. It is on these words and on many parables and passages of the gospel that the Church founds her doctrine: that good works as well as faith are necessary for salvation.

The gospel (John, ch. xvi.) for this Sunday is a very beautiful one. It is taken, as so many of the gospels in Paschal time have been, from our Lord's last sermon to His disciples. Once more He is about to leave them;

not in anguish as He did before when He was about to meet with death at the hands of His persecutors, but in joy—having triumphed over the powers of death and hell. Nevertheless, it is a parting, and one which they must have felt very deeply. Accordingly holy Church reveals in the following words, the motives they had for consolation and which our Saviour uttered for our consolation as well as for theirs :

> " Jesus said to His disciples, Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, He will give it you. Hitherto you have not asked anything in my name. Ask and you shall receive that your joy may be full. These things I have spoken to you in proverbs : the hour cometh when I will no more speak to you in proverbs, but I will show you plainly of the Father. In that day you will ask in my name, and I say not to you that I will ask the Father for you. For the Father Himself loveth you because you have loved me and have believed that I came out from God."

We may believe without hesitation or misgiving accordingly that if we are (as St. Teresa phrases it) in God's good graces that He will give us all we ask for, unless He sees that our petitions are injurious to our eternal interests. And if He seems to delay before He grants us the favours we ask of Him, let us remember what He said on one occasion to St. Gertrude, " My child," He told her, " if I seem to keep you or My other servants waiting a long time before I grant you what you ask, it is because you are pleasing Me so much by the faith and confidence you display in persevering in prayer, in spite of your prayers not being answered at once ; and because you are thereby earning an everlasting reward."

ROGATION DAYS

MONDAY, Tuesday and Wednesday in the sixth week after Easter are called Rogation days. They owe their origin to great calamities which befell the Church and diocese of Vienne, and surrounding districts, in the second half of the fifth century. To avert God's wrath and make reparation for the sins of the people, St. Mamertus, who was at that time Bishop of Vienne, decreed that there should be three days' public expiation accompanied with processions in this week throughout the diocese. The custom spread to the rest of Gaul, for mention is made of it in the first Council of Orleans (A.D. 511) in which strict regulations are laid down as to fasting and abstinence, both of these practices of penance being enjoined on the faithful. Rome did not adopt these customs till the eighth century, when they were formally sanctioned by Pope St. Leo III.; but, unwilling to cast the gloom of the penitential exercise of fasting on these days of rejoicing, she has never imposed it on the Church.

The object of the Litany of the Saints and procession which, followed by Mass, are the leading features of these days of prayer, is to avert the punishments which the sins of mankind so justly deserve, and to bring down the blessing of God on the fruits of the earth. When we reflect for a moment on our own sins of commission and omission, and on the constant insults and injury made to the honour and glory of our good God by an unbelieving world, it would seem that we could not do too much to try to make reparation for them. Should we not realize also how mightily we depend upon Him for help and support in every single event in life? how our peace and prosperity and that of those we love are entirely in His hands? If such motives as love, faith, and confidence in God fail to move us to

ask these favours of Him in the most efficacious manner we can—that is through the intercession of His saints—at least the motive of fear should urge us to do so. And yet how many, in spite of believing these truths in theory, avail themselves of any trifling excuse to avoid putting them into practice, to their own irreparable loss? No doubt legitimate reasons may prevent people assisting at the recital of the Litany of the Saints, or at Mass, on the days of Rogation; if such is the case, they should at least join in spirit with the Church which is offering up these fervent intercessions all over the world on these days, and say the Litany and assist at Mass in spirit at home.

The introit for Monday's Mass is intended by holy Church to excite feelings of love and confidence in the mercy of our good God.

> "He hath graciously heard my voice from His holy temple, Alleluia; and my cry before Him came into His ears. Alleluia, Alleluia."
>
> Ps. "I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my refuge and my deliverer. Glory," etc.

The epistle for this, and the following day, is taken from that of St. James (ch. v.), in which he exhorts the faithful to prayer and gives as an example of the efficacy of the just man's prayer that "Elias was a passable man like unto us, and with prayer he prayed that it might not rain upon earth, and it rained not for three years and six months; and he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth brought forth her fruit."

The gospel for Monday and Tuesday inculcates the same lesson (Luke, ch. xi.). Our Saviour after giving an example of how importunity effects what friendship fails in accomplishing, uses these words, emphasizing them with, "I say to you: Ask and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be

opened to you. For everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

There is a special note of rejoicing throughout the Mass of the vigil of Ascension. Thus in the introit which is taken from Isaias we read :

> "Declare the voice of joy and let it be heard, Alleluia : declare it even to the ends of the earth. The Lord hath delivered His people, Alleluia, Alleluia. Shout with joy to God all the earth : sing ye a psalm to His praise."

In the epistle (Ephes., ch. iv.), St. Paul appears to soar above the things of earth when contemplating the glorious sight of Christ's Ascension into Heaven, when " He led captivity captive. He Who ascended above all the Heavens that He might fill all things." And after enumerating all the provision He had made for carrying on His work on earth, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and doctors, " for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ," he winds up with thrilling words, which appear in one sentence to sum up all the glories and privileges of the new covenant purchased by our Saviour's Incarnation and death, " until we all meet into the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ."

The gradual echoes these words :

> "Alleluia, Alleluia. Christ is risen and hath shone upon us whom He redeemeth with His Blood. Alleluia. I came forth from the Father and came into the world : again I leave the world and go to the Father."

ASCENSION DAY

"INTROIT. Ye men of Galilee, why wonder you looking up to Heaven, Alleluia; He shall so come as you have seen Him going into Heaven. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia."

The epistle from which the introit is also taken is from the Acts of the Apostles (ch. i.), in which St. Luke describes our Lord's glorious Ascension into Heaven. In the gradual we read:

"God is ascended with jubilee and the Lord with the sound of trumpet. Alleluia. The Lord is in Sina in the holy place: ascending on high, He hath led captivity captive. Alleluia."

In the gospel (Mark, ch. xvi.), the commission of our divine Saviour to His apostles "to go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature" is recorded.

"And these signs shall follow them that believe. In my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay their hands on the sick and they shall recover."

It has been sometimes asked by believers as well as by infidels why these promises of our Lord are not fulfilled. The answer is that they were fulfilled as long as they were necessary. In the early days of the Church, men required some striking proof that the apostles were in truth what they professed to be—ambassadors of the Great King of Heaven and earth. The standing

miracle of the Catholic Church founded on the rock Peter, unchangeable and unchanged, supplied in later ages all reasonable grounds for faith. Accordingly God, who does not change the course of nature except for weighty and sufficient reasons, does not ordinarily work miracles by the hand of His ministers. On the other hand, the evangelization of pagan nations such as that of China and Japan in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, or of the natives of America—both North and South more recently—have been blessed by miracles as striking as those which attended the missionary labours of Peter or Paul, or their holy colleagues and disciples. The miracles which take place yearly at Lourdes or Pompei or at our own sanctuary at St. Winifred's Well, prove beyond dispute that the power of working miracles has never died out in the Church founded by Christ.

We cannot study the Church's cycle without observing that every period in the Liturgical year is marked by a special note, one which is full of significance to the Christian soul. In that of Advent it is one of ardent expectation for the Emmanuel, God with us. Lent is the time of penance and preparation for the august sacrifice on Mount Calvary. Holy Week is given over by holy Church to a loving compassion with our beloved Saviour in the sufferings, mental and physical, which He endured for our redemption. At Easter and in the weeks which succeeded it, we are bid to rejoice because "the Lord hath truly risen." We are now called upon to assist in spirit with His apostles at His glorious Ascension into Heaven. But how can this fail to remind us that we have to live by faith, not by sight, and that the food for faith is prayer? Accordingly, though we cannot raise our eyes as they did and behold Him lifted off the ground and a cloud taking Him out of our sight, we can, like them, take refuge in an upper

chamber in Jerusalem, and there persevere with them and "Mary, the Mother of Jesus," in prayer.

Before turning our thoughts to ourselves, let us endeavour to enter a little into the feelings of the apostles during these nine days in which they awaited the coming of the Holy Ghost.*

They must have entered into their retreat (for such in truth it was) with feelings of profound compunction for their past infidelities. Can we doubt that they were penetrated with the thought of how little they had profited by the presence of the Son of God in their midst! How deeply they must have grieved for their desertion of Him! But, predominating amongst all these feelings, must have been that of profound gratitude to God, and perfect faith and confidence in Him.

The Church, taking her cue from these events chronicled in holy Scripture, directs our attention constantly during the days preceding the Ascension and those following it to the duty of prayer. And many of the faithful, following her lead, endeavour yearly at this time, to withdraw as far as they can from the affairs of this world and to occupy themselves with those of the world to come. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that there are few things more insisted upon in the New Testament, and even in the Old, than the necessity of such withdrawals. One would have thought in the spacious times of the patriarchs and prophets of Israel, ample occasions would have offered for meditation on the ends for which man was created which would have made it unnecessary to go in search of them. But what could be more striking in this context than what we read in Osee where the Holy Spirit, speaking by the mouth of the prophet says, "I will allure him and draw him into the wilderness

* The Holy See encouraged this devotion in a special manner in an Encyclical letter of Leo XIII., dated May 9th, 1897, in which it is said: We decree and command that throughout the whole Catholic Church this year and every subsequent year, a Novena shall take place before Whit Sunday in all parish churches and in all other churches and chapels.

and there I will speak to his heart." Again we find the practice of rising in the night or in the early morning when the world sleeps, specially commended in Holy Writ. For instance, in the words of the royal prophet, "I prevented the dawning of the day and cried to Thee, because in Thee I very much hoped" (Ps. cxviii. 147, xiv. 7), and "O God, my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day" (Ps. lxii. 1), and in many other passages. Our divine Saviour constantly, by word and example, preached this duty of withdrawing from time to time into solitude in order to shut out the world, and listen to the whisperings of the Holy Ghost. And if we wish to understand the full significance of these precepts, they are contained in those words, "With desolation is the whole world made desolate because no man thinketh in his heart."

Many reasons may be alleged against leaving home or occupation in the case of mothers, or men or women who are dependent on the day's work for their living; but though when possible it is better to put some distance between one's self and the world in making a retreat, it is not essential. The really essential part is that we should, if possible, with the help of our confessor (if we are in the habit of going to the same one), and of one of the many manuals used for the purpose, retire into the sanctuary of our heart and, assisted by the grace of God, see what is going on there, repent for the past, and make good resolutions for the future.

The following suggestions may be useful for those who are not in the habit of making retreats. We have reduced the exercises to a minimum: that is to two in the day, one in the morning and another in the evening. If possible this should be supplemented by a quarter of an hour's spiritual reading combined with a visit to the B. Sacrament in the middle of the day.

We could not do better, on the eve of our retreat, than spend a little time (after invoking God's blessing

on it) in contemplating the scene in the Cenacle. Three points are brought prominently before us by Holy Writ: (1) the holy union of hearts; (2) the presence of "Mary the Mother of Jesus"; (3) perseverance in prayer.

We need never be alone at our prayer. If we are so, it is to our great loss and privation. For faith teaches us that in the words of the Apostle, we are "one body and one spirit" with Christ, and thus united not only to Him but to the countless band of holy saints and martyrs and confessors and all the inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem. How much we have to gain by invoking them, and in particular our patron saints and our angel guardian! To this we should join a special love and devotion to the Blessed Mother of God. St. Bernard tells us that she is the channel of God's graces, and we could not do better than to confide this, and all the other affairs of our eternal salvation, to her safe-keeping. Perseverance in prayer is another secret of success. The devil, foreseeing the benefit to our souls, will do his utmost to distract us; for, as the holy Abbot Nilus tells us, "the whole war between us and the evil spirits is about nothing else than prayer." He will also suggest difficulties: such as that we are injuring our health by rising half an hour earlier, or going to bed half an hour later, if it is only by such means that we can find time for prayer. A firm will, aided by the grace of God, must be our support, and a great confidence that, in spite of our weakness, we can do all things in Him who strengthens us.

In order to give a connecting link to the suggested subjects of mental prayer, they will be based on the Exercises of St. Ignatius, in which the principle is laid down that "man was created to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul, and to use creatures in so far as they contribute to this end." Accordingly, in the first three days, we shall consider Him in the light of our Maker and Bene-

factor, and therefore as having the greatest right to our praise. In the three following days, we may look upon Him as our mighty Indweller, and reflect on the right this gives Him to our loving reverence. In the concluding three days, let us look upon Him in His adorable humanity as our Model in our service of Him, and of our fellow creatures.

THE NOVENA OF THE HOLY GHOST, OR RETREAT IN THE CENACLE

Friday a.m.* (1) "God made me and is now preserving me in life, with a purpose for each moment of my life. God has a constant unchanging desire that I should, at all times and to the best of my power, praise, revere, and serve Him." What a tremendous idea this should give me of the importance He attaches to this life of mine! And, looking back on my past life, can I say that I have looked upon it as a precious gift from God to be made use of in His service? Or has my work, or my pursuit of pleasure, art, or any other end, absorbed me to such an extent, that whole days have passed without me giving Him the homage of more than a few hurried prayers night and morning? God created me out of love, and in order that I should contribute to His honour and glory. This I can do by referring all my actions to Him. My life is passed in a never-ending routine of eating, sleeping, rising, and going to bed at night, working and recreating: all these things are innocent in themselves, and they may be made unspeakably pleasing to God if offered up to Him. "All whatsoever you do, in word, or in work, all things do ye in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him" (Col. iii. 17). If on rising in the morning, we accustom

* "Journals of Retreat," by Fr. J. Morris, S.J., p. 144.

ourselves to offer our day's work, and words and thoughts to God—even the effort we make in rising—in union with the actions of our divine Saviour whilst He was on earth, for His honour and glory, we are storing up graces and merits for moments which would otherwise be quite wasted as regards eternal life. (2) Though God's purpose in preserving me in life is unchangeable, inasmuch as it must be for the same end for which He created me—that is for His glory, yet His treatment of me is constantly changing. "Commit thy way to the Lord," says the Psalmist, "and trust Him and He will do it." Thus He alternates joys and sorrows in our life as He sees we require them; sufferings in order to detach us from creatures, joys and consolation in order to attract us to Him. And, as St. Paul teaches, we must thank Him for *both*: "in *all* things . . . giving thanks." This is the true service of God; not that of hirelings, but of loving and submissive children of their Father Who is in Heaven.

Friday p.m. (1) "Knowest thou not that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance" (Ro. ii., 4). Observe that it is not His justice but His goodness and mercy that the Apostle says should appeal to us in order that we may do violence to our nature. Here again what matter this gives us for praise and thanksgiving! For, knowing as He does, that penance is the only remedy for the three evils in which Adam's sin has plunged us, "the concupiscence of the flesh and the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life," He has gone before us to encourage us by His example and to make the way easy for us. For Christ has made the way of salvation easy to *us*, but at the cost of anguish unspeakable to Him Who took upon Him our sins, and by Whose stripes we are healed; and all that He asks of us in return is that we should take His yoke upon us, and He adds, "for my yoke is sweet and my burden light." What is this yoke that He asks us to bear for His sake? That of taking up our Cross and

following Him; and we do this by accepting from His hands all the trials of daily life in a spirit of penance: acknowledging that we are suffering them *justly* on account of our sins. Our submission to the Church's ordinances with regard to prayer, fasting, and the duty of almsgiving are all indicated in bearing the yoke of Christ. For He has said: "He that heareth you heareth Me and heareth Him that sent Me." (2) It has been objected by non-Catholics that the regulations imposed by the Church on her children are quite unwarranted by Christ's teaching and are opposed to the liberty of the Gospel. But the merest glance through the pages of the Old and New Testaments show us the importance attached to the duties of temperance and self-restraint, in the matter of food and drink, in the mind of God. What terrible words those are in the Book of Ezechiel (ch. xvi.), "Behold, this was the iniquity of Sodom, thy sister; pride, fulness of bread and abundance; and the idleness of her and her daughters, and they did not put forth their hand to the needy and the poor." The parable of Dives and Lazarus in the Gospel of St. Luke (ch. xvi.) affords an exact parallel to the above. For all we are told to Dives' discredit is that he was a rich man, who was "clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously every day," and that, in spite of his riches, he did not give so much as the crumbs that fell from his table to the beggar Lazarus "who lay at his gate." And Dives, the narrative continues, "died and he was buried in hell." To examine one's conscience, therefore, in the light of these teachings of the Old and New Testament, and of the beautiful text we have quoted of St. Paul's, could not but be salutary to all who are in earnest about their soul's salvation. For if it is the thought of God's benignity which should lead us to penance, how pleasing to Him must be the little privations we impose on ourselves whether in eating, or drinking, or clothing; whether we do so in a spirit of penance or in the interests of the

children of His predilection, the poor. (3) The subject of our examination at the end of this meditation should be the use we have made of creatures : *i.e.*, food, comforts and luxuries. The Acts of the Apostles (ii., 46) give a hint of what our conduct should be : for, speaking of the early Christians, St. Luke says : " They took their meat with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God." If at every meal we gave heartfelt thanks to the great Benefactor, Who (as the Psalmist says), " opens His hands and fills all living creatures with benediction," we should be in no danger of misusing His gifts.

Saturday a.m. (1) St. Paul says : " This is the will of God, your sanctification." Since it is the divine Will that we should become holy and by our professions of piety, we have committed ourselves to God's service, what stands in the way of it ? Scripture answers the question : " Your iniquities have made a division between you and your God and your sins have hidden his face from you that he should not hear " (Isa. ch. lix.). Attachment to venial sins which have become habits with us, so that we are hardly conscious of committing them but which are so visible to our neighbour that if, by the grace of God, we succeeded in correcting ourselves of them, would cause those who knew us best to look upon us as changed persons, are such a division. St. Francis de Sales says of such sins : " Charity is sometimes weakened and depressed in the affections, till it seems to be scarcely in exercise at all and yet it remains entire in the supreme region of the soul. This happens when the fire of holy love remains covered under a multitude of venial sins, as under ashes, so that its flame is smothered though not wholly extinguished." (2) A yearly review of our conscience is the remedy which spiritual writers suggest for this state of things. By taking a bird's-eye view, as it were, of our past, we shall discover more easily our ruling passion, which is the root from which they mostly spring. Pride, besides being the cause of many of our interior sins, leads

to sin against our neighbour by detraction, envy, jealousy, lies, malice and uncharitableness; sloth, to neglect of God's service, sadness and tepidity; sensuality, to all sins of the flesh and a luxurious manner of living opposed to the teachings and example of our crucified Master; and so forth. God alone can open our eyes to our manifold shortcomings and infidelities to grace —for it is only "in His light that we shall see light." And this grace we should ask of Him fervently; for "the gift of self-knowledge is one of the greatest favours God can bestow upon us and there is no progress without it."*

Saturday p.m. "My eyes are ever on the Lord and He will take my feet out of the snares" (Ps. x.). Though the struggle between us and our habitual sins should be one as of life and death—no compromise being possible where our soul's salvation is in danger (as it is for every sin deliberately indulged in), there is another and a totally different view which we should take of faults into which we are surprised by the weakness of our nature. Spiritual writers tell us that our Lord allows us to fall into them for two reasons. One is that they may make us turn to Him and (in the words of the Psalmist) keep our eyes ever on Him, from a heartfelt knowledge, born of experience, of our utter helplessness. And another is because it deepens our humility, and humility, more than anything else, makes us pleasing to God. Let us arm ourselves with this most powerful weapon, the thought of the presence of God, and keep our eyes as far as possible fixed upon Him; and then the moment we are conscious of having displeased Him, whether the sin is great or small, implore His forgiveness, and it will happen to us as to the ten lepers that even before we go and show ourselves to the priest (*i.e.*, to confession) we shall be made clean.

Sunday a.m. The Scriptures often remind us that one of our chief duties to Almighty God is to praise

* "Lights and Counsels" by Bishop Curtis, p. 146.

Him. "I will praise God at all times; the praise of Him shall never be out of my mouth." And yet we read in another part of the holy Book, "praise is unseemly in the mouth of sinners." And we are sinners! How shall we reconcile these contradictions? Christ does so in bequeathing to us the Sacrifice of the Mass. "In the Mass He is recognized by the Eternal Father as the Catholic or Universal Priest through whose hands all gifts of prayer and sacrifice must be presented to God in order for acceptance, so that God neither heals, nor forgives, nor teaches, nor blesses, nor rewards through the power of any other. All is 'through Jesus Christ our Lord.' The priest is His delegate. Hence the Fathers call priests Christ's vicars, ambassadors, representatives, signifying that when they teach, absolve and offer sacrifice, they are discharging Christ's sacerdotal office."* Jesus, therefore, in renewing the sacrifice on Mount Calvary in an unbloody manner in the Mass makes His Father an offering of homage, praise and thanksgiving alone worthy of Him. In every Mass at which we assist, we should keep this thought steadily in mind: My Saviour is here present mystically, as He was in Bethlehem and on Mount Calvary. He is helping me to do what I am bound to do and yet can never do without His assistance. He, who is one with the Father, enables me to give God the honour and glory which is His due. He is once more making propitiation for my sins; He is making intercession for me and with me; finally He renders His Eternal Father a thanksgiving which is perfectly acceptable to Him for all the graces He gives us "through Jesus Christ our Lord." To hear Mass, therefore, is the greatest of our religious duties; and we should do so if possible daily. If we are prevented, we can at least assist at it in spirit, and if we do so with fervour and devotion and with an ardent desire to have been present, had it been possible, in person, it will bring down great blessings on us.

* "The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass," by Cardinal Vaughan.

Sunday p.m. Thanksgiving and praise may be said to be identical. The heart that truly loves God and recognizes Him as a most merciful and loving benefactor breaks out by instinct, as it were, into acts of thanksgiving. And the sacrament of the Eucharist (which word signifies thanksgiving) enables us to do this in the most perfect manner possible. In the Mass we stand, as it were, afar off. At the *Domine non sum dignus*, we confess that we are unworthy of approaching Him. But when, trusting in His loving words bidding us all to come to Him—the blind and the lame and the poor and the hungry, that we may be healed and comforted —we receive Him, humbled and contrite, into our heart, it is, or should be, an instinct to break out into hymns and canticles of thanksgiving. "What shall I render the Lord for all He has done for me?" should be our foremost thought. Or that of Zaccheus, who, when our Lord offered Himself to him as his guest, received Him with joy and said, "Behold, Lord, half the goods I have, I give to the poor, and if I have wronged any man of anything, I restore him fourfold." There is nothing more pleasing to God than a grateful heart. Spiritual writers say that ingratitude dries up the source of God's graces, whereas a heartfelt gratitude acts as an irresistible attraction to Him, and when He comes it is with arms full of blessings.

Monday a.m. (1) "If we remember death we shall never sin," is a fundamental principle of a Christian life. Therefore we can never omit a meditation on death in any review, however slight, of our interior life. Also there is no thought which will contribute more to inspire us with a profound and filial reverence for our heavenly Father, which is one of the ends (according to St. Ignatius) for which we were created, and which will be the subject of our reflections during the next three days. The following passages from St. Francis de Sales' writings show the right view to take of death: "As the Christian life should be formed on that led

by Jesus Christ," he says, " so should be his death. Jesus Christ died to satisfy the justice of God for the sins of all men and to put an end to the reign of iniquity ; to render His Father the most perfect obedience by submitting to the sentence of death justly pronounced against all sinners whose place He held ; to render by His death an infinite homage to the majesty of God ; and to acknowledge His sovereign dominion over all creatures. Every Christian is obliged to accept death in these same dispositions ; and he should esteem himself happy in the thought that Christ wished to unite the sacrifice of His own divine life infinitely more precious than that of all angels and men—with the sacrifice which each one of us has to make to God of our miserable and unworthy life, and that by uniting our death with His, He should render it capable of meriting an eternal life. Every Christian is obliged to labour during his whole life to acquire these dispositions—as they are given to him, to learn how to die well. We shall fear death the less, the more fully we enter into the designs of our Saviour, who, dying but once to render to His Father the supreme homage which was due to Him, offers to Him till the end of ages, the death of each of His members as a continuation of His sacrifice " (2) " The sacrifice which we make to God of our life," St. Jerome says, " if sincere, is the greatest act of love that we can make." And St. Augustine says, " If the angels could envy any privilege in man, it would be his ability to die for the love of God." And St. Francis de Sales, commenting on these words, says that " we shall draw down upon ourselves God's greatest blessings by a humble acceptance of death and the continual sacrifice which we make to Him of our life. For although our life is so vile a thing, defiled as it is with so many sins and so little worthy of being offered to God, yet it is the most considerable gift we can make to Him, and God is so good as to receive it as a good odour in His sight."[2]

Monday p.m. (1) "After death comes the judgment." The saints and Doctors of the Church are unanimous in saying that our judgment will be a searching one. We read in holy Writ: "He will search Jerusalem with lamps." The soul of each one of us is a sanctuary. It should be a holy one as the city of God was accounted holy, and the lamps with which God will search it are the ten commandments. By reflecting therefore in the presence of God and with His assistance on the manner we have obeyed them, especially the first and greatest commandment, that we love the Lord our God with our whole heart, and with all our strength, and all our mind, and our neighbour as ourself, we may in some manner bring home to us the grounds of God's judgments on which our doom will be founded. (2) Every moment of the day we are piling up material for our particular judgment. Not so much as a loving aspiration, a devout thought of the Passion, a look even at the Crucifix, will go unrewarded; any more than a wilful neglect of God's service; a harsh word to our neighbour, a rash judgment, go unpunished. For the secrets of all hearts will be revealed. What can we do to make ready for that moment on which Eternity depends? A holy Jesuit gives an answer to this question which each one of us, as we feel the want of it, can apply to our own heart. "To love our Lord is the preparation. To wish Him to know the inmost recesses of my heart; to rejoice that He knows it all; to long that there may be nothing there that He does not wish to see; to have my heart always as I should wish Him to see it at my judgment, this is the preparation for the Judgment."*

Tuesday a.m. (1) The only fitting attitude of the creature towards his Creator is that of absolute confidence. To trust God both in life and in death, in time and eternity, is to make the greatest act of love

* "Journals of Retreat," p. 122. Fr. J. Morris, S.J.

and reverence of which we are capable, and the greatest return for all that He has done for us. Our sins and infidelities need be no obstacle to this confidence, for, as St. Francis de Sales says: "Our misery is the throne of God's mercy; the greater, therefore, our misery, the greater should be our confidence in Him." St. Paul gives us another ground for trust: "He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how hath He not with Him, given us all things." What have you to fear?" asks the holy Bishop of Geneva, "being the child of such a Father without whose providence not a hair of your head can fall. It is wonderful that, being the children of such a Father, we have, or could have, any other anxiety than to love or serve Him. Have the care He wishes you to have of yourself and your family and no more; you will then see that He will have care of you." (2) What peace we should enjoy at all times if we could see with our bodily eyes what we can only know in this life by faith: that is that our Lord is with us at all times, so that even "if we fall we shall not be bruised because the Lord putteth His hand under us." If our future seems clouded and we are threatened by trials and crosses, we can make no better act of homage to God than by submitting in these and in all things to His Will—firmly believing that as He has protected us in the past, He will continue doing so in the future. For, as St. Vincent says, "perfection consists in accepting all that comes to us, joys, pains, or afflictions, for the love of God." (3) Our Lord revealed to a holy servant of His that no fault wounded His loving Heart more than want of confidence. "Such," He said, "is my love of man. I am an infinite treasure, placed by My eternal Father at the disposal of all. Only in eternity will mankind realize what their loss has been for neglecting and despising Me." And again He said: "The greater the misery of a soul, the greater joy I have in raising her out of it. Souls who have

sinned and are forgiven, find in their past lives fountains of grace as they are endless sources of humility."*

Tuesday p.m. (1) Nothing will conduce more to confidence in God than the thought of His presence. A great servant of God has bequeathed to us in her revelations a very striking picture of what the thought of God's presence should mean to us: "One time my understanding was led down to the sea-ground, and there saw I hills and dales, green, seeming as it were, begrowing with wrake† and gravel. Then I understood that if a man or woman were there under the broad water and he might have sight of God, so as God is with a man continually he should be safe in soul and body and take no harm, and overpassing, he should have more solace and comfort than all this world may or can tell. For He will that we believe that we see Him continually, though we think that it be but little, and in the belief He maketh us evermore to get grace. For He will be seen or He will be abiden (in) and He will be trusted."‡

(1) This thought of the constant presence of God will lead to another important result which is that we shall more readily see what is the will of God in our regard. What is more common than the complaint, "I am quite willing to do the will of God, only I am not sure what it is?" The answer spiritual writers make to this is, Do God's will as far as He shows it to you, *e.g.*, in fidelity to the day's duties, and He will show you further in His own time. A holy Jesuit§ who died a martyr to his duty as chaplain in the Great War, used to recommend the practice of promising for a day —or more—to refuse nothing of God that He asked. Some people may shrink aghast at such an engagement,

* "Extracts from the Life of Sr. Benigna Consolata, Visitation, Como.

† Seaweed.

‡ "Revelations of Mother Juliana of Norwich," ch. x.

§ Fr. Doyle, S.J.

but they need not. God only asks great things from great souls. From the rank and file of humanity, He only asks little acts of fidelity. Possibly He reminds them that they had promised to get up the moment they were called ; that it would not injure their healths materially to go to Mass. During the course of the day, He may whisper in their ears, " Why put off that visit of charity which ought to have been paid long ago ? " He may stop them when they are going to eat something they particularly like ; or when they are about to make an uncharitable remark. But with what a peaceful conscience will they lay their heads on their pillow that night if they have obeyed the voice !

Wednesday a.m. (1) The saints are unanimous in saying that no spiritual life is possible without the practice of prayer. Also that a soul who practises mental praise will never be lost. Why so ? Because prayer, so to speak, gives God His chance. He makes Himself heard in the soul that turns to Him, either to speak to Him or to listen to Him ; and in prayer she does both. Many people are disturbed by the multiplicity of directions given for meditation, but in reality they are simple enough and may be reduced to three points : the preamble ; the body of the meditation ; and the affective prayers, or colloquies in conclusion. The preamble is perhaps the most important of any, and with many it occupies half the time they give to prayer. It consists first of an act of profound self-abasement. For a pattern we must take the publican who would not so much as raise his eyes or his hands to Heaven, but struck his breast saying, " O Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." The more we realize what we are in God's sight when we come before Him in prayer, the more He will stoop down to hear us. (2) The body of our prayer should be something taken (preferably) from the New or Old Testament : either special teachings, parables, reflections on the Passion

or even one sentence such as " He pleased not Himself ; " or, " He went about doing good," may be made to yield abundant fruit in prayer. (3) From thoughts of this kind we should draw food for affective prayer, or, as it has been called, " heart-to-heart prayer." We should speak to our Lord, adore Him, tell Him of our love for Him ; protest in the words of St. Francis that we wish henceforth to begin to serve Him, " for hitherto we have made but little progress," and so forth. Half an hour, or even less, spent in this way, even though we may have to fight with distractions, will be very pleasing to God.

Wednesday p.m. (1) One of the fruits we shall draw from mental prayer is that it will put more life into our vocal prayer. For instance, supposing we gave seven days, on the pattern of St. Teresa's " Paternoster," to meditation on the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer, it would be impossible for us to say it afterwards mechanically, or without a profound sense of the meaning of the words we utter. All devout Christians are in the habit of saying the Rosary. Many make at least on Fridays the Way of the Cross ; but what difference there must be in the way these devotions are performed ! In the Apocalypse we may read of the incense which is evermore being offered to God by the Angels " which are the prayers of His saints." We are all His saints, for may we not all hope that through the merits of Christ we shall spend our eternity with Him in Heaven ? But have we not misgivings whether our prayers are at all times worthy of being offered to Him by His holy Angels ? Do we always and at all times show Him that reverence in our intercourse with Him which was one of the ends for which we were created ?

Thursday a.m. (1) During the next three days we could not do better than take our Lord as a model in order to learn from Him how we should accomplish the third end for which we were created : that is, in order to serve Him. The first and most striking example

He gave us was of obedience. Thus we read in the prophecies, "It is written of Me at the head of the Book that I should do Thy Will. Lord, I have desired it." And again of the years which Jesus spent with Joseph and His blessed Mother, "And He came to Nazareth and was subject to them." And St. Paul sums up His life on earth in the words, "Christ was obedient to death, even to the death of the Cross." It would not be too much to say that much more than one half of the world is in subjection to the rest of mankind, and that the main object of those that are subject is to free themselves from this servitude. And even in the case of those who to all appearance are independent, there is not one who does not owe obedience to laws of God and man. The example of our Lord throughout His life on earth will show us the spirit in which we should accomplish this duty, for He said, "I am with you as one that serveth." Genuine obedience, the obedience which comes from our heart, sees God in every authority that is placed over us. It may be said to be the "fine flower" of many virtues; for it cannot be practised without patience, charity and, more especially, meekness and humility, the characteristics of our divine Saviour Himself, and the virtues which He bade us learn of Him. (2) The motto of Satan and his followers was "*Non serviam;*" and the same cry is at the bottom of half the sins and miseries of men. There is only one remedy, which is not so much to hate disobedience as to love obedience. Children should be taught to understand the true grounds of obedience, so that in after life when the child has grown up to man or woman's estate, they may know how to command or to obey; this can only be done by seeing our divine Head Jesus Christ in all His members, and realizing that it is only by uniting ourselves to Him and taking Him for our model that we shall make ourselves pleasing to Him.

Thursday p.m. (1) "In your patience you shall

possess your soul." Without patience we are at the mercy of all the enemies of our soul, and shall never know peace. St. Catherine of Siena, who may be said to be the preacher of patience—so much did she write and speak about it—says that "impatience springs from imperfection of life when the root of self-love is not mortified. For they accept not the discipline of God with patience. . . . This disobedience to God's will comes from pride, which makes them choose to serve God in their own way and not in His way. For if we believed in very truth that everything except sin comes from God, and that He wills nothing but what is for our good, a truth we taste in the Blood of Christ crucified, were we not warped from it by this tenderness for ourselves, we should be reverently obedient and accept whatever God sends us. But because we are unfaithful to this belief, we become impatient under the pains and troubles we suffer. Impatience is the habitual outcome of infidelity to what God ordains for us." (2) Spiritual writers say that patience is to seculars what their Rule is to religious; and the reason of this is obvious. The root of impatience being (as St. Catherine says) self-love and self-will, it must be destroyed in the heart. The religious does this by fidelity to his Rule and by silence. To those living in the world, the conquest of those passions, which are innate in all men and are the greatest obstacle to divine grace, can only be accomplished by continual acts of loving submission to God's Will, and great care to bridle the tongue, in short by the practice of patience.

Friday a.m. (1) St. Bonaventure says, "He who desires to go on advancing from virtue to virtue and from grace to grace should continually meditate on the Passion of Jesus." The prophet Ezechiel was inspired to promise in God's name that a day should come when "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart

of flesh." This is what the contemplation of the sufferings and death of our Saviour does for us. It would be possible, or at least conceivable, for us to acquire and practise all the Christian virtues from a sense of duty and high ideals, but without love, without that inward compunction and turning to God which the Scripture calls being "converted to the heart," they would be of no avail before God. He who made us loves us and desires our love: with this object we should contemplate Him in His Passion; dwell on the words in which the Evangelists describe the tortures He suffered; take our stand beside His Blessed Mother at the foot of the Cross, and this to realize what He has done to win our love. The first cause of the Passion, St. Thomas says, "is that He wished man to know how much God loved him."

Friday p.m. (1) "The love of Christ presseth us." The love which moves us to sorrow over the sufferings of our divine Saviour is so pleasing to Him, that He revealed to one of His saints that a tear shed over His Passion was worth more for eternal life than a year's fasting on bread and water. And the love of God in a devout soul necessarily leads to action. It leads above all to an intense desire to work and pray, and, if needs be, to suffer even for the souls for whom Jesus shed His precious Blood. "Let not His sufferings be in vain" should be our heart's cry. *Tantus labor non sit cassus.* Every prayer that we breathe to God for sinners whilst going about our day's work; every invocation of the Sacred Heart; every act of charity done for our neighbour, seeing our Lord Himself in the person of His little ones, will be recorded by the holy angels, and, united to the treasure of the merits of Christ, will contribute to the salvation of souls. "Why should we put off till to-morrow," says a holy soul, "to do good? Why should we wait to be rich to give away? Is not the gift of *ourselves* greater than silver or gold, and does a day, or even an hour pass,

without our being able to give a kind word, or a tear to a soul in pain ?"*

Saturday a.m. (1) We could not do better on the eve of Pentecost Sunday than turn to the contemplation of the scene in Jerusalem in which the apostles, and "Mary the Mother of Jesus" await the coming of the Holy Ghost. We can picture to ourselves the disciples, and more especially John the beloved, and Peter the head of the Church, coming to the blessed Mother to learn what saints have called "the secret of Jesus." How much she would have to tell them about those thirty years in which He, the Son of God, was subject to her and Joseph! We have also much to learn from her. The saints have found inexhaustible stores of wisdom from Mary's example, though the Scripture is so sparing in words about her; so let us sit at their feet, and profit by their knowledge. One of the lessons they would have us learn from her is that great trials are inseparable from great graces. What an astounding honour it was for the humble Virgin to be singled out from all women to be the Mother of the Son of God! But the hour of her joy and triumph found her an outcast, begging shelter and being refused it at the Inn, so that she and her holy spouse had to seek shelter in a stable. Simeon, inspired by the Holy Ghost, sings of the deliverance of Israel through the coming of the Messiah. But in the same moment he plunges a sword into Mary's heart by foretelling what is to happen to her. And this coming anguish was ever before her eyes until, in the accomplishment of God's eternal designs, her slow martyrdom was consummated on Mount Calvary. (2) There are other lessons we have to learn from Mary; not only for deeds on the heroic scale, but for those of everyday life. To few is it given to live on the heights, but who will not find priceless treasures of wisdom and edification in the thirty years spent by the Mother of God in humble

* Thérèse Lesueur.

toil and obscurity in the company of Jesus and Joseph ? "Be ye perfect," Christ tells us, "as your heavenly Father is perfect." This would seem to be a precept impossible of fulfilment, had we not the example of Mary before us. Let us then turn our inward eye at times to the holy house of Nazareth—admire the recollection of its inmates ; their loving solicitude to provide for each other's wants ; not an impatient word could ever have troubled its peace. In spite of their poverty, it is impossible to believe that any were sent away from that door unfed or uncomforted; and we should do our best to imitate them.

Saturday p.m. (1) "In this we know that we abide in God and he in us because he hath given us of his spirit" (I. John iv. 13). The Third Person of the Blessed Trinity is the love of the Father and the Son ; in the words of a great Doctor of the Church : "They are not more than One. One that loveth Him who is from Him ; and One that loveth Him from whom He is ; and One Who is that very Love."* Through the sacrifice of His life on Mount Calvary, Christ opened the gates of heaven for all believers, and in sending the Paraclete to His Apostles, He established the kingdom of grace on earth. For the Holy Ghost comes into the baptized soul with grace, establishes His reign in it by grace, and dwells in it in an inexpressibly intimate way by means of grace. "The Holy Ghost dwells in us because He descends from our Head upon all His members. . . . Over and above all the graces given before Pentecost we have the special grace of a new dispensation. We who are born again and are members of the mystical body of Christ, are under a dispensation of the Holy Ghost so full and of such manifold grace, that there is no state of man that is not embraced by it, and in which there is not given an abundance of grace exceeding all measure that we can conceive, and meted out according to the necessities of each individual soul. 'I

* St. Augustine, De Trin., I., vi., cap. 7.

am come that they may have life and may have it more abundantly.' By grace we are made sons of God by adoption."* (a) We ought to co-operate generously and faithfully with the will of the Holy Spirit that is working in us. (b) We ought to be specially devout to the Holy Ghost. He is our guide, our friend, our counsellor. (c) Beware of the three degrees of disobedience to the Holy Ghost: (1) Grieve not the Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of Redemption (Eph. iv. 30); (2) Resist not the Spirit (Acts, vii. 51); (3) Quench not the Spirit (I. Thess. v. 19).

Spiritual writers agree in advising the exercitant to make few rather than many resolutions. What those resolutions should be must depend on the knowledge we have acquired of our soul's needs during the retreat, and to the leading of the Holy Ghost. Any of the following practices taken from approved authors would, if persevered in, lead to great results for God's glory and our spiritual gain.

One is that of giving a rapid glance several times in the course of the day to see how we stand in the sight of God. This glance must be directed to the *heart*, remembering the word of the inspired writer, "With all watchfulness keep thy heart, for life issues out from it" (Prov. iv. 23). It is there we must stifle those movements of pride, envy, uncharitableness and all other vices of our nature; and turning to God we should ask His forgiveness for them. It is by this means we shall acquire that purity of heart which will bring down His grace upon us.

Another is to make St. Paul's words: "All whatsoever you do, in word or in work, all things do ye in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. iii. 17), the motto of our lives. In the first place it is to our union with our divine Head that our actions owe their merit in the sight of God—the closer it is the more pleasing they are in His

* "Memorabilia," p. 271, by Fr. Wilberforce, O.P.

sight. Again the acceptance of God's will which is implied by thanking Him in trials and joys equally is the greatest proof we can give of our love for Him, and of our confidence in Him, and in His love for us.

A third might be the resolution to offer up all our practices of piety, our morning and night prayers, even each stray Hail Mary, with as much devotion and reverence as possible, trying to remember that we are addressing them to our merciful and loving God.

Again a very useful resolution could be made of guarding against the loss of time, of words, and of money. A moment will come, and it may not be far distant, when we shall hear the awful words : " Give an account of thy stewardship, for now thou canst be steward no longer." It is an excellent habit to examine our conscience every evening on the opportunities we have wasted during the day of saying a kind word, of practising a good action, and of referring all we have done or said to the honour and glory of God.

A fifth might be of availing ourselves of the many opportunities we are given in the course of the day of mortifying ourselves by acts of self-denial: even of going in search of them, remembering the words spoken of our divine Model that " He pleased not Himself." In this way we shall be sure of following our crucified Master.

WHITSUN EVE

The Church on this day makes a twofold preparation for the coming feast ; that of fasting, and, in the Office of first vespers, of singing the praises of the Holy Ghost.

In the ancient dispensation belief in the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity was shrouded in mystery. But at times the prophets were inspired to let fall a word or two which prepared mankind for the fuller knowledge which was withheld from them till the coming of the

Redeemer. Such was the mention of the Spirit in Genesis when it was said, " He moved over the waters," when they were divided from the dry land. It was He who (as Dom Guéranger remarks) spoke by the Prophets and moved over the universe of mankind as He had moved over the waters in the Creation. He inspired the prophet Joel to say, " I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." And spoke through Ezechiel when he said, " I will pour upon you clean water and you shall be cleansed from all your filthiness and I will cleanse you from all your idols. And I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you ; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and will give you a heart of flesh ; and I will put my Spirit in the midst of you" (xxxvi., 7). From the moment of the Incarnation when the Angel Gabriel signified to the Virgin Mary that she " had found grace with God," and that the Child which would be born of her should be called " the Son of the Most High," the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity was set forth explicitly in the words, " The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the holy child which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God " (Luke, i. 35). All through the public life of our Lord, the knowledge of this fundamental doctrine was growing in the minds of His apostles and followers. But it was only on the eve of His sacred Passion that Christ announced the mission of the Holy Ghost in the words : " It is expedient for you that I go, for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you " (John, xvi. 7).

In former times the vigil of this feast was kept like that of Easter. The baptism of such catechumens who had been prevented by sickness, or absence, from receiving the sacrament at Easter, took place in the night, and was followed by Mass at daybreak. Instead of twelve, six prophecies, only, were read for their instruction. These were read as at Easter ; after

which the baptismal water was solemnly blessed. Where there was no font, the litanies were sung as on Holy Saturday. Etheria's journal (from which we have already quoted) again gives the earliest account of the ceremonies held in Jerusalem on this feast. On the eve of Whit Sunday, a vigil-service was held in the Church of the Anastasis, presided over by the bishop. At dawn all proceeded to the Martyrium for sermon and Mass. At the third hour (9 a.m.) when the Holy Ghost descended on the apostles, the bishop and people went in procession singing psalms to Sion, where the passage taken from the Acts regarding it was read, and a second Mass celebrated. Then the Archdeacon called on the people to assemble in the afternoon at the Eleona, whence a procession was made to the summit of the Mount of Olives. After a service of lections, hymns, and antiphons, all descended for vespers in the Eleona. Afterwards the bishop and people returned in procession to Jerusalem, where services were held in the Martyrium and Anastasis and in the Chapel of the Holy Cross, which lasted until midnight."*

The introit for the Mass for Whitsun Eve is especially intended for the newly baptized. It is as follows:

> "When I shall be sanctified in you, I will gather you together out of all countries and I will pour upon you clean water and you shall be cleansed from all your filthiness and I will give you a new spirit. Alleluia, Alleluia."

The epistle for Whitsun Eve is taken from the Acts of the Apostles (ch. xix.). The gospel gives us those words of unspeakable consolation with which our Lord prepared His disciples for His approaching departure.

> "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world seeth me no

* "The Church's Year," pp. 70-71 (Fr. McKee).

more, but you shall see me because I live and you shall live. In that day you shall know that I am in My Father and you in me and I in you. He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. And he that loveth me shall be loved of my father and I will love him and manifest myself to him" (John, ch. xiv.).

WHIT SUNDAY*

THE Jews gave the name of Pentecost to the time elapsing between the Passover and the "Feast of weeks," and the same was adopted by the Christian Church. The ancient liturgies allude to this day as the birthday of the Church, and it has ever been looked upon by her as only second in importance and dignity to that of Easter. To realize its greatness we should ponder over the words spoken by our Lord at the Last Supper when He spoke of the coming of the Holy Ghost, and then turn to the Acts of the Apostles to see their fulfilment.

Four times Jesus in His last discourse returned to the subject of the all-importance of the Mission of the Holy Ghost, and what it was to mean to His disciples. In the first He tells them that "the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and bring all things to your mind whatsoever I shall have said to you" (xiv. 26). A second time He spoke of the Holy Ghost saying: "But when the Paraclete cometh whom I will send you from the Father, the spirit of truth who proceedeth from the Father, He shall give testimony of Me" (xv. 26). And again in even more forcible language: "I tell you the truth: it is expedient that I go, for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you, but if I go, I will send him

* Whit or White, from the colour of the garments of catechumens.

to you" (xvi. 7). And once more, "But when He the Spirit of Truth is come, He will teach you all truth. For He shall not speak of Himself, but what things soever He shall hear, He shall speak and the things that are to come He shall show you. He shall glorify Me because He shall receive of Mine and shall show it to you" (xvii. 12-14).

We learn from these words that it was in the eternal decrees that the Son should have taken His place at the right hand of His Father, before the Holy Ghost was sent on an external mission to man, which is the sequel and manifestation of the mysterious and eternal production which is ever going on within the Divinity. St. John alludes to this great truth in the words, "For as yet the Spirit was not given, for Jesus was not glorified (vii. 39).

The presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church, and in each individual soul in a state of grace, is the fulfilment of the solemn promise of the Son of God to man. And how unspeakable are the blessings which this divine Guest brings with Him! The apostles had enjoyed the presence of Jesus during the three years of His public life. They had walked with Him; had heard the words of wisdom dropping continually from His lips; had witnessed His miracles, been fed by Him in the desert, and finally had partaken of His Flesh and Blood in the mystery of the Holy Eucharist; and yet up to the moment of His Ascension to Heaven, there was no transformation visible in them. They, and the rest of the disciples, believed in Jesus and doubtless loved Him ardently, but they remained what they had always been, timid, ignorant, unspiritual men. The Acts of the Apostles, written by the Evangelist St. Luke, tell us of the change wrought in these humble men, and especially in their head, Peter, the fisherman, after the coming of the Holy Ghost on Whit Sunday. From that moment they rose to the full height of their sublime vocation, and became worthy foundation-stones of the Church,

and ambassadors and mouthpieces of the Word made flesh.

The miraculous descent of the Holy Ghost under the appearance of "parted tongues as it were of fire" took place once, only, but Christ's promise that He would be with His Church till the consummation of the world still holds good. The holy union of doctrine and of hearts typified by the gift of tongues exists still in the Catholic Church founded on the rock—Peter—and in her alone. As St. Augustine says, "the whole body of Christ, the Church, still speaks in all tongues. Nay, I myself speak all tongues, for I am in the body of Christ. Greek is mine, Syriac is mine, Hebrew is mine and all is mine, for I am one with all the several nations that speak them!"

We all need the Holy Ghost. His presence in our soul brings with it besides sanctifying grace, the seven gifts which holy Writ especially attributes to Him, and those which St. Paul calls "the fruit of the Spirit;" namely, charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, and chastity (Gal. v. 22).

It has been remarked by spiritual writers that whereas the law given to Moses was promulgated in thunder and gloom from Mount Sinai, for the law of fear still reigned and the Messiah had not come, the law of love was inaugurated by the Spirit of love—the mutual love of the Father and the Son—in sunshine and glory. And His coming was ushered in by a sound from Heaven as of a mighty wind, for what is so vehement and resistless as love? For "love is strong as death . . . the lamps thereof are fire and flames. Many waters cannot quench charity neither can the floods drown it" (C. of C. viii. 6-7).

Only in Heaven shall we realize what the second coming of the Holy Ghost signified in the soul of the ever-blessed Mother of God in increase of grace and sanctity. Once more she was, in her acquiescence to

the divine Will which detained her fifteen years longer on earth after her Son's Ascension to Heaven, uttering the word which let loose the torrent of grace and mercy on the human race in the Incarnation, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, may it be done unto me according to thy word." It was by this second coming likewise that Mary was fitted to become "the second Eve, the true Mother of the living." Thus were the words of Scripture verified, "The stream of the river maketh the city of God joyful: The Most High hath sanctified His Tabernacle."

The mystery of the Pentecost was accomplished at the hour of tierce, the third hour of the day, or nine in the morning. Accordingly tierce is celebrated with special solemnity in religious houses, and begins with the "Veni Creator Spiritus," the first verse of which is sung kneeling. The stational church for this feast is St. Peter's.

The introit as well as the gradual and other prayers celebrate the glories of the Holy Ghost.

> "The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole earth, alleluia, and that which contained all things hath knowledge of the voice—alleluia, alleluia, alleluia. Let God arise and His enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Him fly before His face."

In the epistle, taken from the Acts of the Apostles (ch. ii.), we read from the narrative of an eye-witness, St. Luke, of the descent of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles, and the marvellous change operated in them.

The gospel is taken from the sermon of our Lord to His disciples at His Last Supper (John xiv.), in which He promises them a gift which is more than equivalent to all that they will have to give up for His sake: that of peace. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; not as the world giveth do I give unto you."

This peace is the direct result of the reign of the Holy Ghost in the soul. It is the hundredfold in this world promised by our Lord to His followers as a reward for their sacrifices, whilst awaiting an eternal one in the next. It is a peace which is born of humility, nourished by charity, and carried on the wings of holy hope and confidence in God—of which the Psalmist says, "*In pace in idipsum dormiam et requiescam, quoniam tu Domine singulariter in spe constituisti me.*" It is a peace founded on the glorious truths of salvation: that God is our loving Father, the Church our Mother, and on His promises to us. For we know that the "fear of the Lord is honour, and glory and gladness and a crown of joy. The fear of the Lord shall delight the heart, and shall give joy and gladness and length of days." Peace can only be found in the satisfaction of that deep-rooted craving for God which He has implanted in the soul which nothing earthly can satisfy. "For," as St. Augustine has said, "God has made us for Himself, and we can never rest until we rest in Him."

The Sequence, *Veni Sanctus Spiritus*, which dates from the end of the 12th century and the authorship of which has been attributed by some to Pope Innocent III., is recited on Whit Sunday, and daily during the octave.

THE TIME AFTER PENTECOST

This period of the year, which is known liturgically as the Time after Pentecost, should have a very special meaning to the souls of the faithful; for, having followed our holy Mother the Church through the upward ascent of her steps towards complete union with her divine Spouse, we see her replenished with all His gifts, which He now distributes to each individual soul through her instrumentality. In Advent she invited her children to make ready for the coming of Emmanuel, the Son of God. She rejoiced with holy Simeon at His birth in

time Who was from all ages. In Lent she prepared them by prayer and penance for the great Sacrifice on Mount Calvary. She mourned over His burial, and sang her alleluias with the angels and the Church triumphant over His glorious Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven. And now she, in the person of the apostles, has received the "unspeakable gift," the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, Whom Christ promised should teach her all truth and abide with her for ever. Truly did He, Who spoke by the prophets, say, "What is there I could do for my vineyard that I have not done?" And each one of these graces—these unspeakable gifts—the individual soul who is in communion with the "Mighty Mother," may appropriate to herself. She may say: For me He was born, for my sins He suffered the torments of the Cross, and now that He is risen, I may, by the grace of the sacraments, rise with Him to a new life." What is this new life? we should do well to ask ourselves. In the first place it signifies *growth*, for life presupposes growth. And if we would learn more, what better explanation could we find than that contained in the words of St. Paul: for he tells us to do "the truth in charity, that we may in all things grow up in Him who is the head, even Christ" (Eph. iv. 15). It is this growth, this progress in union with our divine Head, which we find put before us in the contemplative or unitive life as we learn it from the saints, and other accredited teachers of holy Church, and it is to the consideration of this life that the following chapter will be devoted.

CONTEMPLATION, AND THE UNITIVE WAY

Fr. Wilberforce makes use of the following comparison to illustrate the different ways by which the soul attains to contemplation. Three men are at an equal distance from London, their objective. One is carried thither by

an Angel (Daniel, ch. xiv.) ; another by an express train ; a third reaches it on foot. "The first may be likened to a soul carried to God by the gift of extraordinary contemplation ; the second by the gift of ordinary contemplation ; the third we may liken to the state of most souls who gain union with God by the humble and laborious process of daily mortification and prayer." The following suggestions apply only to those in the last category.*

Love tends to union. And the love of the Christian soul in a state of grace is ever tending towards union with the divine Lover, though, owing to the imperfections to which human nature is subject, she may never attain to it in this life. It is this desire, fostered by the grace of God, which is ever leading men and women to separate themselves from home and kindred in order to surrender themselves wholly to the divine attraction. They hear but a single word : "Come," such as Christ spoke to Peter on the Sea of Galilee, but it is enough. Only to a few, however, does our Lord address that word. In all ages of the Church, even in the most favoured, in the days of the primitive Christians, such vocations were exceptional. For "many are called but few are chosen." But, as we learn from innumerable passages in the Bible and by the teaching of the Church, we are all called to a holy union with our divine Saviour. To all without exception, the word has gone forth : "Behold ! I stand at the gate and knock. If any man shall hear My voice, and open to Me the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with Me." (Apoc. iii. 20). In these words we have a summing up of God's dealings with the human soul. In the first place, should we not acknowledge with profound self-abasement that there is no return that we can make worthy of Him who yet humbly condescends to ask for our love ? The goodness, the mercy, the readiness to pardon are on God's side—the frailty, the ingratitude, the unworthiness on ours.

* "Memorabilia," p. 171.

St. Teresa is transported out of herself, as it were, when she speaks of this unequal alliance between the God of infinite greatness and the human soul. She compares it to a king who asks the hand of a humble dowerless maiden; of King Assuerus' choice of the Jewish captive Esther as his queen. And even in such comparisons how far short is the figure of the reality!

St. Teresa proceeds to point out what a powerful motive this should be to urge us to do our utmost to purify our souls, and to direct all our actions to the one object of pleasing the divine Spouse since this is all the dowry we have to bring Him. Nevertheless, there is one return we can make Him which, little as it sounds, is, notwithstanding, so far-reaching in its effects that it would seem as if He were ready to accept it in lieu of everything else, and, in a sense, as an adequate return for all the graces He is prepared to bestow on us. And that is the offering of our *will*. To realize the greatness of this gift, we must go back to its origin in the mind of God. From all eternity it was decreed that man's rational soul should be a reflection of his Creator's. "And God created man to His own image, to the image of God He created him" (Gen. i. 28). Thus the will of man, though weakened too often by passion and obscured by ignorance, is so precious in God's sight, that He appears to respect it and to leave it free even when by doing so He allows him to bring about his own destruction. For, as St. Augustine points out, "God redeemed man without his co-operation, but He will not save man without it." The exercise of the will is of such importance in the work of sanctification that we shall return to it later. Let us first give our fullest attention to the inspired words already quoted. From them we gather that our Lord knocks at the door of our heart, *and waits*. For to "stand" there argues that He does not pass on at once, like an impatient guest, but gives the soul time and opportunity to reflect Who it is who asks admission, and what

she will gain by admitting Him. What a wide field this opens out for thought and reflection! Eternity may hang on the balance—for it may be with us as with the holy city, so beloved by our divine Saviour of which He said: "If thou hadst but known the day of thy visitation, but now it is hidden from thine eyes."

There is another thought to which these words give rise, for few as they are in number, they are truly pregnant in meaning, and that is that our Saviour uses two means of awakening the soul which, possibly, slumbers. He knocks first to arouse her attention and then He speaks. What are these knocks but the events of daily life, all of which, seen in the light of faith, are so many indications of God's will regarding us? For nothing is accidental or of no moment in the lives of God's children. What a difference it would make in our spiritual life, if instead of being prostrated to the ground by our trials and sorrows, or carried off our feet by prosperity or joys, we recognized God's providence equally in both, and took them, as He intended we should take them, meekly and gratefully from His hand. The mighty wind which sweeps over the Atlantic, whose course may be tracked by the wreckage of ships and the loss of men's lives, is doing God's work no less than the gentle breeze which brings with it health and refreshing showers. They are both messengers from God; and in the last day we shall see how they have equally contributed to His glory and the good of our soul. For "all things work together for good for those who love God."

We have also to listen for the voice of the Spouse. And this we can only do by keeping our heart free from worldly fetters; and by defying the power of him to whom Christ gave the name of the Prince of this world, who wages incessant war against all who lead a life which he sees to be the greatest obstacle to his reign on earth; that is, one of prayer and recollection. "Watch and pray," and "again I say to you watch,"

are amongst our Lord's most frequent injunctions. To make sure that His inspirations do not pass unheeded, we should aim at what St. Francis de Sales calls interior silence. We pour ourselves out too much on exterior things. The world, though we may see its emptiness and have broken loose from its pleasures, still keeps an unconscious hold of us, sapping our energies and diverting our thoughts from Him who is alone the source of all our good. To obviate this danger, spiritual writers recommend much reading of the Lives of saints and the works of ascetic authors. In the Lives of the Saints, we have set before us the example of heroic sanctity, one result of which is to humble us by showing us our own pitiful shortcomings; another that of making us realize the transformation God works in the souls of those who correspond faithfully with His grace. Spiritual reading creates an atmosphere in the soul in which supernatural things thrive, and the purely natural, or material, is relegated to its proper sphere, that is to an inferior one. It gives us fresh ideas too, and so contributes to the fervour and life of our mental prayer; a most important point, as without it we are in danger of going perpetually over the same ground, like a squirrel running round its cage. Every fresh light, even on the most abstruse theological question is a distinct gain to the soul. We learn this from the fact that God has frequently infused a knowledge of such truths into the minds of the ignorant whom He has called to heights of sanctity, when they had no other means of acquiring them.

Venerable Blosius speaking of the advantages to be derived from such studies says: "The mind of a good man derives many admirable gains from spiritual doctrine. It is kept pure from sin; it ceases to be ignorant; it obtains tranquillity; it is illuminated; it is nourished; it is stimulated, and it is rendered beautiful."

All these separate points deserve our serious considera-

tion, because they touch on the special hindrances which the soul is certain to encounter on the path of perfection which leads to the Unitive Life. We can never impress on our minds too forcibly or too distinctly that the heart which still harbours an affection for any sin—such for instance as idle or uncharitable words or thoughts—can never aspire to be the recipient of special graces from Him of Whom it was said that "He loves to dwell amidst the lilies." Thus Cassian, the great Master of the spiritual life, says: "As long as we are doing penance, and are tormented with the recollection of our sins, the fire which burns our conscience must be extinguished by the torrent of our tears. But when, having persevered a long time in humility and contrition of heart, the thought of sin has been effaced; when the thorn which was wounding the soul has been removed by the grace and mercy of God, then we must hope that pardon has been granted to us and that we are entirely purified from our sins. We cannot, however, obtain of God this freedom otherwise than by destroying our passions and by becoming truly clean of heart; for this grace of contemplation is not given to the cowardly and negligent who make no efforts to correct themselves."*

To wage war against her passions and evil inclinations is the special work of the soul labouring in the ruts and swamps of the Purgative Way. In the Illuminative Way she was led by the Spirit into the peaceful paths of divine love where she was made to feel "not in the ordinary way of faith only, but by a sentiment so filial, so sweet that, without any fear of delusion, she recognizes and knows that in all probabilty she is God's own."† Still much remains to be done; and as we learn by the points enumerated by Blosius, in many other ways besides "keeping the soul pure," and enlightening her ignorance, spiritual reading has a work of its own to accomplish in the Christian soul. Let us take, for

* Cassian, Coll. XX., c. vii.

† Père Surin. "*Traité de l'Amour de Dieu*," Vol. I., ch. ii.

instance, the two concluding points : that reading stimulates the soul and that it makes it beautiful.

It is an undoubted fact that few labourers in God's vineyard can get on without stimulants. The Church, with her motherly insight into her children's weakness, does her utmost to provide us with them lest we grow weary and faint on the road. For with what object are the special course of sermons she provides for us in Lent—the Quarant'ores, the Retreats, the Novenas, pilgrimages, and devotions to the saints except for this one ? And, not satisfied with putting before them the observances sanctioned by the use and wont of a thousand or more years, she is ever intent, guided by her divine Spouse, on bringing new sources of spiritual refreshment to the souls of men. Such is the devotion to the Sacred Heart ; that to the Immaculate Mother of God, and to St. Joseph, to which so many graces and favours have been attached in these latter days.

The last on the list of the merits Blosius assigns to spiritual reading is singularly illuminating. He says it makes the soul beautiful. It is an instinct born of God and springing from our divine origin, that the beautiful attracts us as nothing else does. Since this instinct has its source in God we can readily understand how displeasing to Him are the smallest stains and disfigurements on our soul which detract from its beauty, and mar its resemblance to Him Who made it after His own image and likeness. The soul of man in a state of grace is the temple of the Holy Ghost. But this temple is open to the four winds. What more easy then than for dust and defilement to come in through the five portals of the senses ! It is of these disfigurements St. Teresa speaks when she bids us reflect, " that we are all weak and infirm and covered over with the wounds of sin, both because we have inherited a corrupt nature from our fathers, and because we ourselves, by our sins and evil habits in the past, have weakened ourselves still more, and have wounded ourselves from head to foot." Also,

that " we should consider the blindness of our understanding, the corruption of our will which is so prone to follow its own inclinations and to indulge in self-esteem ; the forgetfulness of our memory with regard to God's favours ; the freedom of our tongue in idle speech ; the levity of our heart and its inconstancy in yielding to foolish thoughts and not persevering in good resolutions, and in general its vainglory in every good work and its want of interior recollection." Though we may find cause for humility in applying to ourselves the saint's words, we need not allow them to depress us. For one loving elevation of the soul to God in sorrow for having offended Him is sufficient to efface all such infidelities from His sight, and moreover to bring fresh graces on us ; for never does God forgive us without blessing us. Now nothing leads more surely to a supernatural quickness in detecting stains on our conscience than spiritual reading ; more especially, it need hardly be added, the reading of the Scriptures. No books can be compared with those inspired by the Holy Spirit, whether it is question of the Old or New Testament ; the prophecies of Isaias ; the outpourings of soul of the royal Prophet in the Psalms, or the profound lessons contained in the epistles and gospels. The effect of such reading, and of the prayer which should accompany it, is to beautify and adorn the soul in the manner described so exquisitely by the Psalmist in speaking of the court of the King of Kings—of the Queen in golden raiment wrought about with variety, and of that of the King's daughter, whose glory was all from within, " with fringes of gold arrayed in divers colours."

Another great gain which we derive from the study of the Scriptures is that it will cultivate a holy desire in our soul, without which we shall make no progress in the path of perfection nor ever attain to the life of contemplation.

If we wish to realize the place which holy desire holds in the mind of God, we have only to turn to the Lord's Prayer : the model of all prayers. For the three peti-

tions with which it starts are all framed on the principle of desire; a universal desire for all men as well as for him who utters it. Let us consider them a little more in detail. When we say "hallowed be Thy name" we breathe forth an earnest supplication (and God grant that it always comes from the depth of our heart) that all beings created by Him—whether on earth, in purgatory, or in Heaven—may worship and give homage to Him in time and in eternity. In the second petition we ask Him to cause His Kingdom to come. What do we mean by this, except that it is our longing desire that He should establish His reign in us and in all hearts so that the words of the apostle should be fulfilled, "Thou hast made us to our God a kingdom?" In the third, at Christ's bidding, we make the all-embracing petition which is also a fervent desire, that God's will should be accomplished on earth in the same way as it is in Heaven.

The way for this reign of desires had been prepared long ages before. Daniel, Isaias, the royal Psalmist, had all foreshadowed it. But only with the coming of the Redeemer and the fulfilment of His promise that He would make all things new, was man to learn by what means it was to be accomplished; that means was the union between Christ and the faithful which, in His discourse after His Last Supper, He compares to that of a vine with its branches. Or that which St. Paul describes, speaking of the closeness of this union in the words, "because we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones."

In these words we have the explanation of a mystery which would otherwise have been impenetrable: namely, the importance which God attaches to desires and their fruitfulness in the kingdom of grace. For by our union with our divine Head, our prayers, our desires that God's name should be praised, His Kingdom come, and His will be done reach to the very throne of the most High. So pleasing, we learn from the revelations of the

saints, are the sighs and longing desires we address to Him from a heart united to the Heart of Jesus that He seems unable to resist them. St. Catherine of Siena in her *Dialogo* exclaims: "O my God! how wilt Thou in these unhappy times provide for the wants of Thy Church?" And then—the light coming to her from above—she answers the question, "I know what Thou wilt do. Thy love will raise up men of desires. Their finite works joined to infinite desires will make Thee hear their prayers for the salvation of the world."

How indeed could the Eternal Father resist desires inspired by His Holy Spirit, for to no one else could such desires be ascribed—for are they not in complete accordance with the longing which the Saviour of mankind had for man's redemption in the first place, and secondly to complete His union with his soul in the mystery of the Eucharist. And could these longings have been more forcibly expressed than in the words of the prophet: "Sacrifice and oblation Thou didst not desire. . . . Then said I, Behold I come. In the head of the Book it was written that I should do Thy will. O my God, I have desired it" (Ps. xxxix.). Or in those other words recorded in the Gospel of St. Luke which came from our Lord's own lips: "With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer."

Our Lord made known to St. Gertrude that her ardent desires for His glory and to make reparation for the sins and ingratitude of man were so pleasing to Him that He wished the knowledge of them and of her practices of prayer to be spread everywhere abroad, and promised that He would look with the same favour on those who followed her example as He did upon Her. One of these practices was to plunge her heart, together with the trials and labours she endured in His service, and equally her joys and consolations, into the Heart of her divine Saviour; there as in a furnace all that was earthly of them was consumed so that they became, as it were, pure gold. On one occasion in answer to her divine

Spouse's invitation to ask all she would of Him, St. Gertrude replied : " All I ask is that Thy Will may be perfectly accomplished in me. All my desire and my delight is to see Thee fully satisfied in me and all Thy creatures." And our Lord answered : " My Heart is so touched with that abandonment of thy heart to My holy Will that it will itself supply for whatever may have hitherto been wanting in thy life in this respect, and will henceforth treat thee as if thy whole life had been perfectly conformed to My good pleasure."

It was from the Heart of her divine Master that the saint drew the graces and blessings which at her intercession He poured forth in such abundant measure on saints and sinners—on sinners in order to bring about their conversion and on saints to increase their glory. But she laid also the saints, and above all, the Blessed Mother of God under contribution for the same ends ; appropriating their merits by right of the Communion of Saints, in order to make her soul more pleasing to God and her pleadings for all suffering humanity more efficacious. In her and St. Mechtilde we see the Benedictine spirit of joy and peace carried to its utmost perfection. For, though theirs may be considered a universal spirit, reflecting as it did the Heart of their divine Spouse, yet it was pre-eminently one of gratitude and joy.

In the lives of these great servants of God, we see the perfect accomplishment as far as the human soul is capable of it of the petitions contained in the first part of the *Pater Noster*. To give God praise, to help to extend His Kingdom in all hearts, to pray that all should submit to the divine Will, were the objects for which they lived. But what we have need to realize is that as the *Pater Noster* is a universal prayer which Christ addressed to His Eternal Father on the part of all mankind, it is along these lines that, whether as beginners in the spiritual life or as proficients, God would have us seek the means of our sanctification. And as the great

apostle tells us, " This is the Will of God your sanctification."

St. Teresa, commenting on the third petition, remarks that it is a very high favour which Jesus asks for us and with us ; one which we could scarcely hope for if the previous one for the coming of God's Kingdom in us had not been granted. For she conceives it to be impossible that God's Will should be done on earth as it is in Heaven, unless earth is in some sense changed into Heaven.

To change, therefore, the earthly in us into the heaven-tending through prayer, and that mighty channel of divine grace, the Holy Eucharist—for which Christ bids us ask in the fourth petition of the Our Father, is a necessary step to acquiring the entire resignation of ourselves to God's Will without which we shall never reach the haven of contemplation. Our Saviour, as He tells us in the words quoted at the beginning of this chapter, stands and waits before crossing the threshold of our soul to give us an opportunity of exercising our free will in receiving or rejecting Him. He waits : for it is His way to leave man master of his destiny. The child, the father of the man, is free to exercise this liberty from the moment he comes to the use of reason. For though parents may guide, and tutors and governors coerce, and priest may plead, the last word is ever with the human being, man or woman, himself. And so it will be to the end. But we are not alone. Our soul is a battlefield, little as we may realize it, in which the forces of God—His holy inspirations, His grace, our angel guardian's prayers and guidance—are daily and hourly opposed to the powers of the evil one ; and the latter is backed up in every encounter by the " old Adam " within us. It is not only important, but of supreme importance, therefore, that we should grasp the part that our will plays in the affair of our eternal salvation. In the first place it is in this free choice or election which lies the chief

merit of our actions. In every temptation resisted, every act of love for God or our neighbour, every penitential exercise performed, we are, as it were, owning our allegiance to Him, and fighting under the standard of the Cross. And how plentifully is He prepared to reward such marks of fidelity! For he knows full well that in this world He is at a disadvantage. "O poor Lord Jesus!" His saints have cried, "Thou art a stranger in Thine own creation. Thou art of no account: Thy friends are so few, Thy enemies so many!" Spiritual writers have drawn a parallel between our Lord and David fleeing from his rebellious and ungrateful son Absalom. We read in the Book of Kings (III., ch. ii.) how David was deserted by all but a very few, and amongst these was Berzellai, the Galaadite. And when he was dying, he called Solomon to his bedside and, after giving him many injunctions, said to him, "But show kindness to the sons of Berzellai, the Galaadite and let them eat at thy table, for they met me when I fled from the face of Absalom thy brother."

In like manner, or rather in an infinitely greater manner, in one proportioned to His love and munificence, will God reward us for ranging ourselves on His side instead of on the side of His enemy. But in this matter, as in all others appertaining to our spiritual life, we have to own that we are poor creatures. For, as the Apostle acknowledges, "we do not that good which we will, but the evil that we hate that we do." What means should we take to strengthen our wills in God's service? God puts innumerable ones into our hands, if we choose to make use of them. For the groundwork of our resistance to God's enemy and our own fallen nature is divine grace; and besides the great channels of grace, of prayer, the Sacraments and the Sacrifice of the Mass, there are numberless other lesser ones open to us whenever we wish to avail ourselves of them. These lesser channels may be compared to the little

rills by which the skilful husbandman in a dry and arid soil distributes moisture over his fields, and so contrives to raise abundant crops. They may be grouped together under three headings: (1) the practice of the presence of God; (2) the practice of penance and self-denial; (3) the assiduous discharge of the duties of our state of life.

One of the trials of the spiritual life is that we can never make sure, or at least not so sure as we should like to be, whether we love God or not. We trust we do, for we have a conviction as strong as that of our own existence that we would make any sacrifice He asked of us, and that we would die rather than commit a deliberate mortal sin or even a venial one in a serious matter. But do we love Him as He asks to be loved; as He deserves to be loved; as we even when we are at our best—that is in the moments when He "looks through the lattices," and shows us some glimpse of His unspeakable attraction—long, with an ardent desire, to love Him? One sure test is whether we think of Him frequently during the day, apart from the time we give up to our spiritual exercises. Another is whether we love His holy Will; for to love God's Will is to love Him. Should we even stand these tests, is that enough? Should we rest on our oars, satisfied that we have done all that is asked of us? God forbid! For, as St. Augustine says, in the spiritual life, not to advance is to be lost, and St. Paul's words are unmistakable: "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended. But one thing I do; forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark to the prize of the supernal vocation of God in Christ Jesus" (Ph. iii. 13-4). One of the chief means of recalling the presence of God as we learn by the practice of the saints and their recommendations, is ejaculatory prayer. Another, which St. Francis de Sales used to recommend to his penitents, was to carry away some

thought from their morning's meditation, which he called a spiritual nosegay, to which they were to return at intervals during the day. This habit gives a coherence to the spiritual life which is frequently wanting. To many the hour or half-hour's prayer is an isolated experience—forgotten directly after it is made; accordingly we lose half its fruit. To give an instance. Let us suppose that the subject of our meditation has been on the cure of the lepers, and that we have dwelt on our Lord's tender complaint, "Were not ten made clean, where are the nine?" What more useful than to take this thought with us throughout the day? We might resolve that our ejaculations shall all take the note of gratitude, such as that which was an habitual one of St. Catherine of Siena, "*Misericordias Domini in æternum cantabo.*" No day passes without our having occasion to suffer some little annoyance or disappointment; and few without some glimpse of God's loving-kindness, if it is only the blue sky above, or a kind word. Let us be ready with a *Deo gratias* or "Father, I thank Thee" on all such occasions. Even one day of steady effort to thank God indifferently for all that happens to us, believing that all that befalls us comes from Him, and is therefore either willed or permitted by Him, will be a day of advancement in His love and service.

The practice of penance and self-denial is equally essential to the subordination of our will to the divine Will. We read in the life of St. Teresa that after her death she appeared to a Carmelite nun and said to her: "My child, your divine Spouse retains your will in order to dispose of it according to His." And when the nun said that this was too sublime a doctrine, Teresa replied, "God will give you strength when you least expect it. To suffer and to overcome one's inclinations in small things is the way to overcome them in the greatest." This teaching is also that of all the great masters of the interior life. Alvarez de Paz, one of the best-known

authorities on such subjects, goes into minute details about the practices of penance which should be adopted by those who feel a call to the contemplative life. In the matter of discipline and hair-shirt, he subordinates all his recommendations to the claims of obedience; a very important point, and one that should be adhered to by all who aim at perfection. For submission to a director is the only way of escaping the pitfalls of self-love and delusion which beset every step of the spiritual life, and from which obedience only can preserve us. We read in the lives of some of the saints (Faber instances that of the Blessed Henry Suso) that our Lord has appeared to them and told them to cease their austerities as there was too much of self-love in them. To perform our penitential exercises, therefore, in obedience to our director, to unite them to the tortures Christ suffered for love of us in His sacred Passion; our strokes of the discipline with His scourging at the pillar; our fasts with His fasts, doing all with a profound sense of our misery and sins, is the way to make sure of such actions being pleasing in His sight.

No risk of vanity, delusion, or other folly need be apprehended from those little acts of self-renunciation, constantly practised and forgotten as soon as they are made, which are recommended so strongly by our masters in the spiritual life. Alvarez de Paz places foremost amongst these the mortification of the palate by denying ourselves delicacies; never eating out of meal time, and then only sufficient to maintain health. All solicitude about food, talking about it, grumbling at it, he maintains to be unworthy of those whose conversation is in heaven, and who profess to be followers of Christ. And to these exterior mortifications should be added interior ones to which even greater graces are attached, as they possess a greater power to unite the soul to Him of whom it was said He pleased not Himself. To keep silence when an opportunity presents itself of showing our knowledge about men and things, or

when the conversation takes an uncharitable turn, to refrain from a sharp word, are real tests of our fidelity in God's service. A holy monk of the desert is responsible for the saying that the best part of our merits lies in the words we have left unsaid.

The assiduous discharge of the duties of our state of life is another fertile source of divine grace. Fr. Baker, the learned author of Sancta Sophia, puts this truth very concisely in these words :

> " Mind your call,
> It's all in all."

Some object that their difficulty lies in not knowing what is their call or vocation. We are all given sufficient light to walk in the path providentially appointed to us. But do we always act up to those lights ? The Scripture tells us, " Whatsoever is given to thy hand to do, do it with all thy might." If we are faithful to the light given us in working to the best of our power —even though, possibly, in uncongenial surroundings with little tangible result—for the coming of God's Kingdom, and that His Will should be done, we shall but have to wait. If God has other and deeper designs for us, He will acquaint us with them in His own good time. The mistake so many make, even those who have made progress in the spiritual life, is to despise little things. Nothing is small or insignificant in a life dedicated to God, whether spent in the world or in the cloister. It is the little things that count. Spiritual writers tell us that our actions are pleasing to God in proportion to their being done with a pure intention for His honour and glory, and in accomplishment of His holy Will. Such actions may be multiplied during the course of the day by people leading what is to all appearance a commonplace unheroic life in the world : as wives, fathers, mothers, daughters ; or even alone in it, if such is God's will. And it is of similar actions that St. Augustine speaks when he

teaches that " Every work which is done that we may cleave to God in holy union is a true sacrifice."

That it is to the dispositions of the soul that God looks in the bestowal of His choicest gifts, as for instance that of contemplation, is clearly St. Teresa's opinion. She writes with regard to those souls who have penetrated into the fifth mansion,* " Every Christian may, with the help of grace, reach divine union, provided that he strives with all his power to renounce his own will and to cleave to the Will of God. Oh ! how many say and believe that they are in these dispositions ! For my part, all that I can say is, if they really are, they have obtained from God all they could desire. They need no longer trouble themselves about the delicious union of which I spoke earlier, for what is best in it is that it springs from the one of which I am now speaking ; and it is even impossible to attain to the former if the latter is not already ours : I mean the entire submission of our will to the Will of God. . . . In this union of pure conformity to the Will of God, it is not necessary that the powers be suspended. God is all-powerful, and He has a thousand ways of enriching souls and leading them into these mansions without taking them by that short way of which I have spoken—I mean to say without raising them to that intimate union with Him whence, after a few moments, they come forth quite transformed. . . . This is the union which I have desired all my life long. It is the one easiest to distinguish and it is the most secure. . . . God asks only two things of us ; one that we love Him and the other that we love our neighbour. We must then work at this ; by faithfully accomplishing these two things we shall do the Will of God and we shall be united to Him. The most certain sign by which we can know whether we are faithfully practising these is, in my opinion, that we have a true and sincere love of our neighbour ; for we cannot know for certain how far-reaching is our

* " The Interior Castle, Mansion V.," ch. iii.

love of God although we have great indications whereby we may judge of it, but in regard to our love of our neighbour, we see more clearly. . . . For considering the depravity of our nature, we could never love our neighbour perfectly if there were not in us a great love of God."

God is love; Heaven the place where love reigns supreme. The joy of the Blessed consists in this, that having become, through a miracle of divine grace, "partakers of the Divine Nature," they share the bliss of all the other inhabitants of Heaven according to the measure and degree of their blessedness. They love all because God loves all, and they are "one spirit with Him."

It is by means of the Holy Eucharist, the daily bread which our Lord asks for us in the fourth petition of the *Pater Noster*, that this transformation will be wrought in us to a greater or lesser extent according to the graces we receive and the disposition with which we receive them. "O Sacrament of Love!" St. Augustine exclaims, "O Sign of unity! O Bond of charity!" And another great doctor of the Church says, "The participating of the Body and Blood of Christ has this as its chief work: to change us into Him and in such wise as that, being made His Body and having become His members, we may be what we receive." A transformation of this kind has sometimes taken place instantaneously and miraculously, as in that of the Magdalene or in that of the penitent thief. Or in the case of St. Paul, of whom we read that by a miracle of grace from being a persecutor of his brethren—for though Christians, they were Jews of his own race and nation—he became another Christ, *alter Christus*, and, as he said truly of himself, "I wished myself to be anathema from Christ for my brethren who are my kinsmen according to the flesh." If we should look in vain for such transforming effect in our soul from the graces God gives so abundantly in the Sacrament of

His love we should find the cause in ourselves. The grace, the willingness to impart, are there on God's side ; the feebleness of will, the want of correspondence on ours. And yet we know that this change must take place either in this world by grace, or by means of the transforming and purifying fires of Purgatory in the next, before the soul is admitted into God's presence. And when Christ, after teaching us to say, " Give us this day our daily bread," goes on to say, " And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us," we see at once the inference He wishes us to draw. For how could we with sincerity pray that God's name should be praised, His Kingdom come, His Will be done, and have asked Him to give us the daily Bread of Communion, namely a common union between our soul and our divine Head and every member of His Body, without being in perfect charity with all those members ? In all these petitions we, by a like intention, " actively unite ourselves " to our divine Saviour, to borrow an expression of the great St. Denis, taken from the following passage in his writings :

" The Lord coming forth from the hiddenness of His Divinity, lovingly became like us, assuming yet not absorbing our entire human nature. He clothes Himself in our compound nature without altering His essential unity ; and by an effect of this same charity, He invites the human race to a participation of His essence and of His own riches, provided that we actively unite ourselves to Him by the imitation of His divine life, for thus we shall be truly associated to the Divinity and share its riches."*

Small wonder if we are tempted to lose heart when we contemplate the dignity to which a union with our Lord through divine grace is capable of raising us, and to feel that the struggle to live on such heights is too great, and so fall back on a lower plane of the interior life. That such would be the inevitable result we

* Hier. Eccl. III., n. 13.

cannot doubt, having regard to the weakness of human nature, were it not for the indwelling of that adorable Spirit whose special work, according to the Apostle (II. Cor. ch. iii.) is to transform us by His power into the image of God. To acknowledge our weakness and many infirmities will only make us more pleasing in His sight provided we arm ourselves with courage, remembering that we can do all things in Him who strengtheneth us. For, "The Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings."

In Mary, likewise, we should see a powerful protector; for as she was the true Mother of God, so is she the true Mother of each of Christ's mystical body who are one with Him. She is an integral part of God's designs for man's salvation and the chosen channel of His graces. Thus holy Church applies the words to her, "He that shall find me shall find life and shall have salvation from the Lord" (Prov. ch. viii.). "She is herself a kind of sacrament, communicating to us life and supernatural blessings." And let us not forget that her special gift and merit is to help us *now* as well as at the hour of our death. She will strengthen us; she will put the enemies of our soul to flight; and again, as in Cana of Galilee, at her intercession, her divine Son will work miracles in us and on our behalf. And there is not one of the many helps she can give us which we can afford to dispense with. For, as Mother Juliana puts it in her Revelations, "our enemies be full fell, and full fierce upon us; and so much is our need the more, for we give them occasion by our falling."

These enemies are from without and within. Hilton, in his "Scale (or ladder) of Perfection," compares them, and the many other obstacles which the Christian soul will inevitably meet with before reaching the goal of contemplation, to the difficulties encountered by a pilgrim journeying to Jerusalem, for, he says, "Jerusalem means the sight or vision of peace." He says "the first step, in order to speed our progress, is to keep two

things in mind, humility and love, and often to say to thyself : I am nothing, I have nothing. I covet nothing but One. . . . The less thou feelest that thou art or that thou hast of thyself through humility, the more thou wilt desire to have Jesus through love. I mean that humility which a soul feeleth through grace at the sight and beholding of the endless being and wonderful goodness of Jesus. And if thou canst not see it with thy spiritual eye, yet believe it ; for through this sight of His being, either in full faith or in feeling, thou shalt esteem thyself not only the most wretched creature that exists, but also as nothing in the substance of thy soul, though thou hadst never done any sin. And this is beautiful humility ; for in respect of Jesus Who is truly all, thou art just nothing. And now that thou art on the way, and knowest how thou must proceed, beware of thy enemies for they will be busy about hindering thee if they can. For their aim is to put out of thy heart that desire and that longing thou hast for the love of Jesus, and to drive thee, as it were, home again to the love of worldly vanities. These enemies are principally carnal desires and vain fears which arise out of thy heart through the corruption of thy carnal nature, and which would hinder thy desire of the love of God that they might fully and peaceably possess thy heart themselves. These are the enemies most nigh unto thee. But there are others. And these are the unclean spirits which are ever busy with their tricks and wiles in order to deceive thee. One remedy thou hast against these ; and that is, whatsoever they say, believe them not, but hold on thy way, desiring only the love of Jesus. Answer them always in this wise : I am nothing, I have nothing, I desire nothing but the love of our Lord Jesus. . . . If thou wouldst know then what this desire is, verily it is Jesus ; for He worketh this desire in thee and giveth it to thee. And He it is Who desireth in thee and He it is Who is desired ; He is all and He doth all as thou wouldst know couldst thou but see Him.

Thou dost nothing thyself but suffer Him to work in thy soul and yield thy assent with great gladness of heart to all that He may vouchsafe to do in thy soul. Thou art nothing but a reasonable instrument by which and in which He worketh; and therefore when thou feelest thy thoughts through the touch of grace taken up with the desire of Jesus, with a great and devout will to please Him and love Him, then consider that thou hast Jesus, for He it is Whom thou desirest. Behold Him well; for He goeth before thee, not in bodily shape, but by the secret presence of His power. Therefore behold Him spiritually if thou canst, and fasten all thy thoughts and affections upon Him and follow Him wheresoever He goeth, for He will lead thee the right way to Jerusalem, that is to the sight of peace and contemplation. . . . God is both everlasting love and light, as St. John saith: 'He that loveth God abideth in the light.' And yet when a man perceiveth the love of this world to be false and failing, and is wishful to forsake it and to seek the love of Jesus, he cannot for all that feel at once the love of Him; but he must abide awhile in the night; for he cannot pass on a sudden from one light to the other—that is from the love of the world to the perfect love of God. This night is nothing but a forbearance and withdrawal of thought on the part of the soul from earthly things by the great desire and yearning it hath to love and see and feel Jesus and spiritual things. This is the night. . . . But this is a good night and a lightsome darkness, for it is a keeping out of the false love of this world, and is the approach of the true day. And, indeed the darker that this night is, the nearer is the true day of the love of Jesus; for the more a soul can, through its longing after God, be hid from the clamour and carnal affections and unclean thoughts, the nearer is she towards feeling the light of Him, for then is it nigh indeed—yea, at her very door. And thus seemeth the prophet to mean when he saith: 'When I sit in darkness, the Lord is my

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light' (Mich. vii. 8); that is, when my soul is hid from all the disturbances of sin, as it were in sleep, then is our Lord my light, for then by His grace He approacheth to show me His light.

"Nevertheless, this night is sometimes painful. . . . It is much better to be hid in this dark night from the sight of the world, even though it were painful to be so, than to be abroad in the false love of this world, which seemeth so shining and so comfortable to those that are blind in the knowledge of spiritual light. For when thou art in this darkness, thou art much nearer Jerusalem than when thou art in the midst of the false light. Therefore apply thy heart fully to the motions of grace and accustom thyself to dwell in this darkness by often assaying to be used thereto and it will soon become restful for thee; and the true light of spiritual knowledge will spring up within thee, not all at once, but secretly and little by little, as the prophet saith: 'To them that dwell in the region of the shadow of death, light is risen' (Isaiah, ix. 2); that is to say, the light of grace springeth up and shall continue to spring in all those that can dwell in the shadow of death—that is in this darkness which is like unto death. For as death putteth an end to the living body and all its carnal senses, just so the desire of the love of Jesus felt in this darkness putteth an end to all sins, all carnal affections, and all unclean thoughts for the time, and then thou mayest hasten to draw nigh unto Jerusalem. Thou art not there yet; but by some small sudden flashes of light which shine forth from the chinks of the wall of that city, wilt thou be able to see it afar off."*

If we turn from this lucid exposition of the difficulties encountered by the soul intent on reaching the goal of contemplation, to the *Pater Noster*, we shall at once be struck by the admirable light they throw on its concluding petitions.

Our Lord bids us ask Him for ourselves and others

* "The Scale of Perfection," p. 209 *et seq.*

not to lead us into temptation. What does this mean but that He wishes us to acknowledge a truth which is too often hidden from our eyes : that it is He Who leads us. *L'homme s'agite et Dieu le mène.* Therefore we are doing what is very pleasing to Him, to own that our weakness is so great that we humbly beg of Him not to try us beyond our strength. Or if He does, "to make the trial or temptation issue so that we may be able to bear it."

In the words, "deliver us from evil," our Lord would have us ask Him to deliver us from the powers of darkness who are ever leagued in opposition to His designs, so that the Holy Spirit may reign in undisputed possession of our heart ; a reign which as long as we are in this world, exists by virtue of His divine gifts of faith, hope, and charity, and hereafter by the union of which St. Paul speaks, when he tells us "that we shall be like to God because we shall see Him as He is" (John, ch. iii.).

Souls who are drawn to a closer union with God by the pursuit of perfection and are rewarded by Him with the gift of contemplation, have a special place in the divine dispensation. It is of them, as of himself, to whom St. Paul alludes in the striking words, "We are God's coadjutors" (I. Cor. iii. 9).

"For the interests of holy Church and the glory of God" (we read in "The Spiritual Life and Prayer"), "it is more important than we are able to say that truly contemplative souls should be multiplied upon the earth. They are the hidden spring, the moving principle of everything that is for the glory of God, for the Kingdom of His Son, and for the perfect fulfilment of His divine Will. Vain would it be to multiply active works and contrivances, yea, even deeds of sacrifice. All would be fruitless if the Church militant have not her saints to uphold her. Martha's works were all directed to our Lord Jesus Christ, but they did not suffice because they were not the 'one thing necessary.' Neither do the saints in Heaven suffice to draw down the divine blessing

upon this vale of tears; there must be some saints remaining still as wayfarers, *in via*, which is the state in which the Master chose to redeem the world."

It is in the contemplative soul more especially that those profound words of our divine Saviour are realized: "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth. For the Father also seeketh such to adore Him. God is a spirit, and they that adore Him must adore Him in spirit and truth." Commenting on these words, the Abbess of Solesmes goes on to say, "Adoration is the most noble act that an intelligent and free creature can perform. It is the form of divine love making a return to God in a created spirit; it is the homage of submission, of perfect subjection, and obedience offered by a contingent being to the necessary Being. Again it is an act of solemn offering and, as it were, a universal recognition by a most perfect holocaust of the sovereign dominion of God. . . . The true adorer is he who, having abandoned all multiplicity, is brought back to perfect simplicity; and who by a sustained effort has been able to establish perfect harmony in his soul, there being now no discord arising from contradictory elements or from rival claims and thus he regains the primary unity of his being. The single-minded soul has but one look, one love, one intention, one pretension, one end. One look, she sees but God; one love, she loves but God; one intention, she tends but to God; one pretension, to please God; one end, to possess God. She neither falls back upon the past, nor anxiously forecasts the future; she peacefully concentrates all her forces into the unity of the present hour, and in the present moment she sees but the unity of God's good pleasure."

This offering of homage and adoration which signifies the prostration of the soul of man before his sovereign Lord and Creator, is indefinitely increased in merit and efficacy by being made in union with the Church militant on earth and triumphant in Heaven, that

is with the whole body of Christ. The learned author of "Spiritual Life and Prayer" makes the following suggestive remarks on this union. She says that the bride of the Son of God, the Church, is then "a help like unto Himself" (Gen. ch. ii.). To her the true King of Peace addresses these tender words: "One is my dove, my perfect one is but one, she is the only one of her mother, the chosen one of her that bore her." She shows forth with sublime completeness all the features that we have described as proper to perfect union; the highest contemplation and the most consummate charity are found in her with a certitude, a stability, a permanence constituting an abiding miracle, and stamping her as divine "even to the consummation of the world." This indivisible union of the Church with God is not a union different from that contracted individually with God by the souls that form His Church. . . . The soul that has attained consummate union is an exact miniature of the Church, one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic. The more she identifies herself with her Mother, the more surely does she reach the heart of Him Who has done everything for His collective bride. . . . Moreover, she unceasingly attains union with God by the august sacrifice which is perpetually renewed within her bosom. That sacrifice which is the mysterious reproduction and continuation of the oblation described in these words by St. Paul, "For by one oblation he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."*

The Church is then the type and model of the contemplative soul. "She is Rachel before being Lea; she is Mary before acting as Martha; she gives to the exterior only out of her interior fullness, following the counsel of the Apostle, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you abundantly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual

* "Spiritual Life and Prayer," p. 400.

canticles, singing in grace in your hearts to God" (Col. iii. 16).*

In the ever-recurring cycle of her liturgical year, as well as in the inner meaning of her mystic life, the Church affords a help and example such as the soul would seek for in vain elsewhere. The following passage from Origen's works shows that this belief was held in primitive times. "To the perfect Christian who is ever in his thoughts, words and deeds serving his Lord, God the Word, all his days are the Lord's, and he is always keeping the Lord's day. He also Who is unceasingly preparing himself for the true life and abstaining from this life's pleasures which lead so many astray—who is not indulging the lust of the flesh but keeping his body under and bringing it into subjection —such a one is always keeping 'preparation day.' Again he who considers that 'Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us' and that it is his duty to keep the feast by eating of the Flesh of the Word, never ceases to keep the Paschal feast, for the pascha means a Passover, and in all his thoughts, words and deeds, he is ever striving to pass over from the things of this life to God and is hastening to the city of God. Finally, he who can truly say, 'We are risen with Christ,' and 'He hath exalted us and made us to sit with Him in Heavenly places in Christ,' is always living in the season of Pentecost, and most of all, when going to the upper chamber like the apostles of Jesus, he gives himself to supplication and prayer, that he may become worthy of receiving the 'Mighty wind rushing from Heaven.' . . . But the majority of those who are accounted believers are not of this advanced class, and from being either unable or unwilling to keep every day in this manner, they require some sensible memorial to prevent spiritual things from passing altogether away from their minds. By the words 'part of the feast,' St. Paul seems to indicate that a life in accordance with

* *Ibid.*, p. 401.

the divine Word consists not in a part of the feast, but in one entire and never-ceasing festival."

In turning from the counsels which saints and spiritual writers pour out in abundant measure on the means of attaining contemplation, to descriptions of this great grace and gift of God when obtained and possessed, we are struck by the comparative brevity and restraint with which they treat the subject. Is it because they fear to disclose the "secret of the King?" Or because they realize the inadequacy of human language to express what is on a wholly different plane: the purely spiritual and supernatural one? In the Canticle of Canticles, which may be looked upon as the hymeneal song of the Church's marriage with her divine Spouse, and consequently of man's soul with God, we find figures everywhere substituted for facts, types for reality. The Psalms abound in mystic adumbrations of that astounding fact which to the believer exceeds all others and is in truth the mystery of mysteries: namely, that God loves us with a surpassing love and craves for our love in return. But only here and there, in scattered phrases implying more than is actually stated, do the sacred writings tell us what passes between the favoured soul and her God. Such a word is the one of the Bride in the Canticles, "I am become in His presence as one finding peace." Another is that of the inspired Psalmist: "In my meditation a flame shall flash out." Fire and flames are the types that Holy Writ most frequently makes use of in describing God's operations of the soul. For the effects of fire are to destroy, to light up and to set on fire. To burn and utterly destroy whatever is opposed to God and His reign in the soul is the first effect of divine grace; its second and third effects are to enlighten her and inflame her with divine love; and this is the special office of the Holy Ghost. Prayer in particular, and the form of meditation which is known as affective meditation: that is heart-to-heart colloquies with our divine Saviour,

are the appointed means of attaining to contemplation. In these devout exercises we, as it were, prepare the altar of sacrifice. To God we must leave "the times or the moments" when He will send the flame to set it on fire. It is in the hymns and spiritual canticles of the saints that we find the most perfect presentation of the love which burnt in their hearts. As if only the melody of verse—winged words—could follow their soul's flight into regions where they dwell "alone, with God alone." Such were the songs of joy and thanksgiving of St. Bernard and of St. Thomas Aquinas; the exquisite outpouring of St. Teresa's soul in her poem, "I die because I cannot die;" and in those of St. John of the Cross. Almost on the same level as these and less known, is the hymn of Silvio Pellico in his prison inscribed to *Dio Amore:*

I love and I have felt against my heart
The throbbing of my Lover's heart: it was—
Shall trembling lips dare tell?
It was the heart of God.
Of God, who rayed with gleaming glory, rules
In the bright heavens, yet finds His chiefest joy
To be with little man
A-wandering in this vale.
The fair intelligences all-amazed
Behold that glory wrapped in fleshly veil
Descending to this heir
Of guilt and wretchedness,
And healing with His sacred Hands the wounds
Of the poor mangled worm; and to all worlds
Shouting His joy should one
Poor sinner love Him back.
I saw Him through the deep abysmal gloom
Draw near me and I heard His gentle plaint
"Why dost thou shrink and hide
From my pursuing love?"
Closer He drew and closer yet, the while
The radiance of His beauty shone more sweet,
Till my heart burnt within,
To burn for evermore.
I love and I have felt against my heart
The throbbing of my Lover's Heart: it was—
I boldly dare proclaim—
It was the Heart of God,
Whom I have seen and known: Who loves me, Whom I love.

WHITSUNTIDE

WHIT MONDAY and Whit Tuesday were formerly kept as holidays, and are still kept as days of devotion. They have a Mass proper to the day, in which stress is laid on the glory of God as manifested by the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, and the descent of the Holy Ghost is commemorated.

Wednesday, Friday and Saturday of Whit-week are Ember days.

Holy Church, following as is her wont in the footsteps of her divine Master, having led her children to Mount Thabor in the contemplation of Paschal joys, and the glories of the Ascension, and of the descent of the Holy Ghost, now returns to the normal life of the disciples of Christ as long as they are in a land of exile. During these three days, therefore, she imposes the duty of fasting and abstinence on the faithful, and in the lessons read in the Mass proper to those days draws their attention to the necessity of joining almsgiving and prayer with that of penance in order to bring down God's blessings on them. In the lessons read on Ember Saturday (Deut. ch. xxvi. and Lev. ch. xxvi.) the holy prophet reminds the children of Israel of God's goodness and mercy to them in the past, and adjures them to keep His precepts so that they may enjoy a continuance of His favours. In these inspired words we read a foreshadowing of the graces God had in store for His people, "I will set my tabernacle in the midst of you, and my soul shall not cast you off. I will walk among you and will be your God and you shall be my people, saith the Lord Almighty."

The Roman martyrology commemorates the feast of SS. Philip and James on the 1st of May; this day,

we read in the Roman breviary, being the anniversary of the translation of their bodies to Rome where they now repose in the Basilica of the Holy Apostles. St. Philip is mentioned several times in the gospels, and the words spoken by him at the Last Supper and recorded by St. John (ch. xiv.), "Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us," and our Lord's answer to him, will ever afford matter for our love and devout meditation. He was sent to preach the gospel in Scythia, and after converting great multitudes there, he went on to Hierapolis, where he was first crucified and then stoned to death. His body, and that of St. James, were brought to Rome somewhere in the middle of the 6th century.

A close relationship existed between St. James and the B. Virgin; hence in the Gospel he is called "the brother of the Lord." St. Jerome and St. Epiphanius relate that our Lord before His Ascension recommended the city of Jerusalem to St. James' care, and that accordingly he was made its first bishop. He was surnamed the Just, and though exceedingly austere in his life, his beautiful soul breathed nothing but love for his neighbour, as is seen reflected in his epistle, to which the Church has given the title of "Catholic." He suffered death at the hands of the Jews, having been first thrown from the summit of the Temple; and then—whilst he was still alive—his martyrdom was consummated by a blow from a club.

The feast of St. Athanasius, who was chosen by God to be the champion of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ against the errors of Arianism, is held on the 2nd of May. He was born in the end of the 3rd century, and was called at an early age to the priesthood. He was chosen by his bishop, when only a deacon, to attend him at the Council of Carthage (A.D. 325), and distinguished himself at it by his noble defence of the Catholic faith. Shortly afterwards he was appointed Patriarch of Alexandria, and whilst occupying that see, he was

exposed to the persecution of four Roman emperors in succession, all of whom had embraced the Arian heresy. Five times he was sent into exile for his firm adherence to the Catholic faith; he was threatened with death and imprisonment, but he never faltered in his glorious testimony and defence of the "Faith once delivered to the saints." He is honoured as a Doctor of the Church. His life closed in peace A.D. 373.

The life of St. Monica, whose feast is celebrated on the 4th of May, is held out as a model for all Christian wives and mothers. She was, after a girlhood of great piety, married to a pagan, whom she succeeded in converting after years of prayer and patient forbearance shortly before his death. Her son Augustine caused her unspeakable anguish by the immoral life he led, and by renouncing the Catholic religion in which he had been brought up for the errors of Manicheanism. The prayers she said and the tears she shed for his conversion were unceasing, so that a holy bishop to whom she had recourse, hoping he might help to convert her son by his arguments, bade her "go in peace, for the child of those tears would never perish." Augustine's conversion followed not long afterwards, and before her death she had the consolation of knowing that her son had dedicated himself and his great talents to God's service. The beautiful words in which she declared that now she saw her son a "Catholic Christian" her life's work was accomplished, and which were followed a few days later by her holy death (A.D. 387), should be read in the "Confessions of St. Augustine."

The Church celebrates the feast of St. John Nepomucen on the 16th. He was a martyr to sacerdotal duty—preferring death rather than to reveal what he had heard under the seal of confession. His reputation as a young priest for great gifts and eminent sanctity led to his being appointed chaplain at the court of King Wenceslaus of Bohemia, where, consequently, he became confessor to the Queen. Wenceslaus—a prey to jealousy—

insisted on hearing what had passed in confession between his wife and her confessor, and St. John refusing, he cast him into prison, subjected him to the tortures of the rack, and when all means of causing the saint to betray his sacred trust failed, caused him to be thrown over the bridge at Prague (A.D. 1368). A brilliant light hovered over his floating body, which caused it to be discovered by the Canons of the Cathedral, who gave it honourable burial. Three hundred years later, his body was exhumed and his tongue, by an astounding miracle, was found intact and having all the appearance of that of a living man.

The feast of St. Bernardine of Siena is kept on the 20th of this month. He will for ever be associated in the minds of the faithful with the holy name of Jesus, which he never ceased preaching and by whose power he made innumerable conversions and worked many miracles. It is said that he learned the virtue of the holy Name from nursing an aged relative, who acquired great sanctity by constantly repeating and dwelling on the name of Jesus. He was a member of the Order of St. Francis, and as this devotion was a new one, he had to suffer much persecution at the hands of those who opposed its introduction, till the holy See stopped the controversy by setting the seal of its approval on it. His holy death took place on Ascension eve, 1444, at the very moment when his brethren were chanting the words: "Father, I have manifested Thy Name to men."

The feast of our Lady Help of Christians was instituted by Pope Pius VII. to commemorate his glorious re-entry into Rome amidst the rejoicing of the whole population in 1814 after his captivity at Savona. This title had been given by St. Pius V. to the Blessed Virgin after the victory over the Turks at Lepanto, and it was then added to the list of her titles in her Litany. The feast comes with especial appropriateness (Dom Guéranger tells us) in the month of May, when all the faithful are intent

in honouring the Mother of God—who is also the Mother of men, and their help and advocate with her divine Son.

The Church celebrates on May 26th the feast of St. Philip Neri, to whom was given the name of the Apostle of Rome. St. Philip showed signs of sanctity from his earliest youth; he combined great austerity with a life of spotless purity. Feeling himself called to the priesthood, he gave up a brilliant future to follow Christ. His immediate preparation for the great work for which Providence destined him was many years of uninterrupted communion with God in prayer. Whilst praying in the catacombs, to which he constantly resorted in order to enjoy complete solitude, and rapt in ecstasy, the Holy Ghost came down upon him in the form of a fiery globe and he was ever afterwards conscious physically as well as spiritually, of the presence of this divine Guest. He then began his active life of preaching in the eternal city, which lasted nearly fifty years, and was blessed by immense numbers of conversions and many astounding miracles. He exercised an indescribable attraction on all whom he came across, and after a time he formed his spiritual children into a congregation (that of the Oratory) which has since spread in many countries and given many holy souls to God. To young men who put themselves under his direction, he gave five rules for keeping pure in the world: to avoid bad company, not to pamper their bodies, to shun idleness, to be diligent in prayer, and to frequent the Sacraments. Some of his sayings have been recorded: for instance, "In this life there is no purgatory. It is either hell or paradise; for he who suffers trials with patience enjoys paradise and he who does not, suffers the pangs of hell." "To begin well and end better, two things are necessary—to be devout to the Mother of God, and to hear Mass daily where there is no lawful hindrance." "Man without prayer is a dumb beast." He was accustomed to say that an immortified soul can no

more pray than an unfledged bird can fly; and to one who asked him advice how to pray, he answered: "Be humble and obedient and the Holy Ghost will teach you." He died in his eightieth year, worn out with his labours in his Master's vineyard, A.D. 1577.

TRINITY SUNDAY

THE first mention we find of a Mass in honour of the Blessed Trinity was one composed by the Saxon monk Alcuin in the eighth century. The Benedictine Order began three centuries later to celebrate a feast in honour of this great mystery, and there are grounds for believing that it was universally kept in the Latin Churches in the thirteenth century. It was not, however, till the year 1334 that Pope John XXII. issued a decree extending the observance of the feast throughout the Churches. The Athanasian creed is recited at the Office of Prime on this day as on all Sundays not taken up by feasts. Cardinal Newman in his "Grammar of Assent" speaks of this great symbol of Faith in the following terms: "It is a psalm or hymn of praise, of confession and of profound self-prostrating homage, parallel to the Canticles of the elect in Heaven. It appeals to the imagination quite as much as to the intellect. It is the war-song of faith. It is

> "The Psalm that gathers in one glorious lay
> All chants that e'er from Heaven to earth found way;
> Creed of the Saints and Anthem of the Blest
> And calm-breathed warning of the kindliest love
> That ever heaved a wakeful mother's breast."

All through the Divine Office the Church appears to take a holy joy in reiterating the word of praise and adoration, "*O beata Trinitas*," during this feast, as if she could not recall it sufficiently to the minds of her children. "Thee do we invoke," she ejaculates, "Thee do we adore, Thee do we praise, O Blessed Trinity.

Thou art our hope, our salvation, our honour, O Blessed Trinity. Deliver us, save us, justify us, O Blessed Trinity."

The knowledge of this great doctrine, the fundamental one of the Christian religion, was only partially known to the Jews. They were but given a glimpse of the truth through the mouth of the prophets. God reserved the full knowledge of it to those who were born in the full light of the gospel. " For the law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ "(John i. 17). The Son, " the Word Who was from the beginning and who was with God," sent us the Spirit of Truth who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, and we adore in the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity the mutual love of Father and Son and the " brightness of eternal light " (Wisd. vii. 26). This is the message of the Gospel and the faith which leads to salvation.

The epistle is taken from that of St. Paul to the Romans (ch. xi.).

> "Oh ! the depth of the riches, of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God ! How incomprehensible are His judgments and how unsearchable His ways. For who hath known the mind of the Lord ? Or who hath been His counsellor ? Or who had first given to him and recompense shall be made to him ? For of Him and by Him and in Him are all things : to Him be glory for ever. Amen."

The gradual enlarges on the same theme.

> " Blessed art Thou, O Lord, Who beholdest the deep and sittest on the Cherubim.
>
> " Blessed art Thou, O Lord, in the firmament of Heaven and worthy of praise for ever. Alleluia. Alleluia.
>
> " Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the God of our fathers and worthy of praise for ever. Alleluia."

In the gospel we read (Matt. ch. xxvii.) Christ's solemn promise to the infant church.

> "At that time Jesus said to His disciples: All power is given to Me in Heaven and in earth. Going, therefore, teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world."

The gospel of the First Sunday after Pentecost (Luke, ch. vi.) is read at the end of Mass.

CORPUS CHRISTI

This feast may be said to be wholly due to divine inspiration. A humble religious of the Order of Hospitallers named Juliana had a vision of a resplendent moon in which, however, there was one dark spot or cavity. This vision constantly recurred, and finally it was explained to her that the moon represented the Church's cycle of feasts in which one alone was wanting, a feast in honour of the Holy Eucharist. In spite of an inward voice which was ever telling her to publish the revelation, Juliana nursed it in her bosom for twenty years before she confided the secret to a holy Canon of Liège, John of Lausanne. He, in concert with several other theologians, took up the idea warmly. An office for the feast was composed, and a Mass in honour of the great mystery was celebrated for the first time in the diocese of Liège in 1247. The Cardinal Legate, Hugh de S. Cher, who was one of the theologians whom John of Lausanne had consulted, favoured the project, and issued a circular to the archbishops and bishops of his province, granting indulgences to all who approached

the sacraments during the feast or its octave. But Blessed Juliana at her death in 1258 could have seen no prospect of her mission being fulfilled of spreading the celebration of the feast throughout the world. Providence, however, was at work, and the elevation of Pantaleone under the name of Urban IV. to the papal throne gave the enterprise a fresh impetus, as he had been Archdeacon of Liège and knew Juliana. Shortly afterwards the miracle of the Bleeding Host at Bolsena, which was witnessed by the Pope (the papal court being in residence at Orvieto close to the Church where the prodigy took place), confirmed him in his belief in the holy nun and that the institution of a feast in honour of the Blessed Sacrament was divinely indicated by these events, and would tend to the honour and glory of God. Pope Urban issued a Bull to that effect in the year 1262, establishing the feast of Corpus Christi on the Thursday after the octave of Whit Sunday. Owing to the disturbed state of Italy, which was torn in two by the strifes between Guelphs and Ghibellines, the Bull did not come into force till the pontificate of John XXII. in 1318. The office of the feast was composed by St. Thomas of Aquinas.

It was when the faith of Christians was growing cold that God saw fit to plant the little seed in the heart of His humble servant which was afterwards under the fostering care of His Church to become a great tree. The ardent faith of the early Christians, of whom it was said that "they were persevering in the doctrine of the apostles and in the communication of the breaking of bread and in prayers," had given way to coldness and indifference. Heresies had risen up and had attacked the faith once delivered to saints. So infrequent were Communions that it was necessary for the Church to issue a decree to enforce a yearly Easter Communion on the faithful under pain of exclusion from her fold. If the effect of the establishment of the feast and the increased devotion to the adorable sacrament of the altar

were not visible at once yet we may see in this, the fourteenth century, and the one succeeding it, what may be called a turn in the tide ; and that tide has never ceased flowing up to the present day. How gratefully we should acknowledge the mercy of God in all these happenings, Who, " openeth His hand and filleth all creatures with benedictions." But while doing so and while availing ourselves of the saintly Pope Pius X.'s rescript permitting all the faithful in a state of grace to approach the holy Table daily, does it not behove us to aim at an imitation in some measure of the lives of the primitive Christians? Foremost amongst the things said of them was that they persevered in the doctrine of the apostles. We know what one of these doctrines was from the words of our Lord, " By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another," for they carried out this injunction to its strictest logical conclusion. Catholics who communicate daily and yet in their lives show no fruits of brotherly love, self-denial, unworldliness, or any mark of being followers of Christ and acting up to the teaching of His apostles, have been compared by spiritual writers to people who eat well but get no good out of their food. We may attribute this state of things in the spiritual order to the want of true inward conversion. Such a conversion as took place in the case of Zaccheus. For we read no sooner had Jesus entered under his roof than he cried out, " Behold, Lord, half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have robbed any man of anything, I restore him fourfold." How many people suffer without being aware of it from a starved heart—a heart devoid of generous impulses whether towards God or man ! They give, but not as the publican gave, eagerly, joyfully, beside himself with joy at the honour Jesus was doing in coming under his roof. So when He leaves, He marks His departure with no huge increase of grace, but as He left Simon, leaving no message behind.

Dom Guéranger bids us observe with what significance the Church ordains this feast to be kept ten days after the Descent of the Holy Ghost on the apostles on Whit Sunday. For this, the greatest gift of God to man after the Incarnation, and which is likewise its sequel and prolongation, comes to us by means of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. "It was by Him Who is eternal fire, that is by the Spirit," says Abbot Rupert, "that Mary conceived; it was by Him that Jesus offered Himself, a living victim to the living God; and it is by the same fire that He now burns on our altars, for it is by the operation of the Holy Ghost that the bread is changed into His Body." On this account, and to recall to our minds that the Body and Blood of the Son of God, which we receive in the Holy Eucharist, was formed in the womb of Mary by the power of the Holy Ghost, the Church brings these two leading thoughts prominently before us in the liturgical prayers of the feast and its octave. The antiphons at Lauds are very beautiful and suggestive:

> Antiphon. "Wisdom hath built himself a house, mingled his wine and set forth his table. Alleluia."
> 2nd Antiphon. "Thou hast nourished thy people with the Bread of Angels: and hast granted them Bread from Heaven. Alleluia."

We read the doctrine of the Eucharist foreshadowed by types in the Ancient Law in the responsories.

> "The multitude of the children of Israel shall sacrifice a kid at the evening of the Pasch, and they shall eat flesh and unleavened cakes.
> "Ye shall eat flesh and shall have your fill of bread. This is the Bread which the Lord hath given you that ye might eat.
> "Moses gave you not bread from Heaven, but my Father giveth you the true bread from Heaven.

"Elias beheld at his head a hearth-cake, and rising he ate and drank: and he walked in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights unto the Mount of God. Alleluia."

The psalms of Matins and Lauds are those of David in which he prophesies the coming of "the perfect tabernacle," and rejoices in its future glories. Again and again the Church repeats the versicle, "He hath made a remembrance (or memorial) of His wonderful works. He hath given food to them that fear Him."

The epistle for the Mass of Corpus Christi is taken from that of St. Paul to the Corinthians (I. Cor. ch. xi.), in which he sets forth the doctrine of the Church with the utmost precision. He prefaces his injunctions with the solemn words, "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you." And ends them with the awful warning, "Therefore whosoever shall eat this bread or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of the chalice. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself not discerning the Body of the Lord."

In the gradual we read:

"The eyes of all hope in Thee, O Lord: and Thou givest them food in due season and Thou openest Thy Hand and fillest every living creature with blessing. Alleluia. Alleluia."

The beautiful sequence "Lauda Sion Salvatorum," by St. Thomas Aquinas, follows.

The gospel is taken from St. John's sixth chapter, in which our Lord proclaims in unmistakable words the mystery of the Blessed Eucharist. Mass is frequently followed by a procession.

France seems to have taken the initiative in the matter of processions of the Blessed Sacrament. The first mention of them occurs in a MS. of the Church of Chartres in 1330, and in an Act of the chapter of Tournai in 1325. The councils of Paris and of Sens also mention them in the years 1323 and 1320. Two centuries and a half later this pious custom was attacked by the followers of Luther, and the Council of Trent in a Chapter devoted to the consideration of the subject decreed that: "The holy Council declares that there has been most piously and religiously introduced into God's Church the practice that each year on a special feast the august and venerable Sacrament should be honoured with singular veneration and solemnity, and that It should be reverently and with every honour carried in procession through the public roads and places. For it is most just that certain holidays should be appointed, whereon all Christians should, with special and unusual demonstrations, evince their gratitude towards their common Lord and Redeemer for this so unspeakable and truly divine favour, in which is represented the victory and triumph over death."*

Ostensoria, or monstrances, do not seem to have been used till the middle of the fifteenth century. The sacred Host was previously borne in a shrine richly decorated and veiled.

The breviary lessons, taken from the sermons of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine, of this feast contain the learned commentaries of those great saints on the words of Scripture. One of these may be taken as a subject for meditation on each day during the octave of Corpus Christi.

Friday.† "The immense blessings of divine bounty, which have been evinced to the Christian people, confer an inestimable dignity upon it. For neither is there,

* Sess. XII., cap. V., and Can. VI.

† St. Thomas of Aquinas.

nor ever was there, any nation so great that hath gods so nigh them as our God is present with us. For the Only Begotten Son of God, wishing that we should be partakers of His divinity, assumed our nature and was made man that He might make men gods. And, moreover, He conferred upon us unto salvation the whole of that which He assumed of ours. For He offered to God His Father, for our reconciliation, His own Body as a victim on the Altar of the Cross; He shed His Blood that it might be our ransom and our laver to cleanse, that being redeemed from a miserable slavery, we might be cleansed from all sins. But that the remembrance of so great a benefit might abide in us, he left to the faithful under the species of bread and wine His Body for food and His Blood for drink."

*Saturday.** "O precious and wonderful banquet, health-giving and replete with every sweetness! For what can be more precious than this banquet wherein, not the flesh of calves and goats as heretofore in the law, but Christ very God is put before us that we may partake of Him. What more wonderful than this sacrament? For in it bread and wine are substantially changed into the Body and Blood of Christ: and therefore Christ, perfect God and man, are contained under the species of a little bread and wine. He is therefore eaten by the faithful but not lacerated: nay, when the sacrament is divided, He remains whole under each particle of the division. But the accidents subsist, in the same without a subject, in order that there may be room for faith, inasmuch as the visible is invisibly taken, being hid under a species not its own and the senses are kept free from deception, for they judge of accidents which are the only things known to them."

The epistle for the Second Sunday after Pentecost is taken from that of St. John (I. John, ch. iii.).

"Dearly beloved, wonder not if the world hate you.

* *Ibid.*

We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death." Why, we may ask, should love bring hatred upon us? Because our love for each other should be so manifest as to excite the envy of the followers of anti-Christ, of whom St. John says (iv., 3), "He is now already in the world." Or are we of the number of those who love only those who love us, of whom Christ said that no thanks were due, for even heathens do this?

The gospel is from the fourteenth chapter of St. Luke, in which our Lord spoke to the Pharisees the parable of the great supper to which many were invited. In this great supper the kingdom of God is typified. Christ in His Incarnation and by His blessed death on the Cross opened it to all men. And first He pressed the Jews, His chosen people, to come to it. But like the men in the parable "they began all at once to make excuse." We see in this as in all our Lord's teachings, that there was not only the obvious explanation applicable to the times in which He lived, but there was also a meaning applicable to all times. The supper to which He invites us is always ready; the table always spread. And He, the divine Host, the King of Heaven and earth, is ever, by His gracious inspirations, by the whispers of His holy Spirit, by every passing event, good or bad, by which He conveys an intimation to our soul of His will in our regard, pressing us to come to it. And on our response to this invitation will depend life everlasting.

*Monday.** "Again there is no sacrament more health-giving than this: in which sins are wiped away, virtues are increased and the mind is made rich with the abundance of all spiritual gifts. It is offered in the Church for the living and the dead; that what was instituted for the salvation of all may profit all. Finally, no one can adequately express the sweetness of this

* *Ibid.*

sacrament by which spiritual sweetness is tasted in its very source and remembrance is solemnly made of that most perfect charity evinced by Christ in His Passion. Wherefore, in order that the immensity of charity might the more deeply be impressed on the hearts of the faithful, it was at the Last Supper when, having celebrated the Pasch with His disciples, He was about to pass out of this world unto His Father, that He instituted this Sacrament and left it as the perpetual memorial of His Passion—the fulfilment of the ancient figures, the greatest of the miracles done by Him, and the special consolation to them that were to be sad because of His absence."

*Tuesday.** "Seeing that men desire this—by the food and drink they take—that they may suffer neither hunger nor thirst, this result is not gained by any other than this food and drink which makes those immortal and incorruptible who take it: that is the very fellowship of the saints where there is peace and full and perfect unity. For—as also men of God who preceded us understood this subject—it was for that purpose that our Lord Jesus Christ commended His Body and Blood in such things as are brought from being many into one. For the first of these is made into one out of several grains and the second flows into one out of several berries. He now—at last—explains how that is effected which he is speaking: and what it is to eat His Body and drink His Blood."

Wednesday.† "'He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood abideth in Me and I in Him.' This then, it is to eat that meat and drink that drink, to abide in Christ and have Him abiding in one's self. And therefore he that abideth not in Christ and in whom Christ doth not abide certainly does not spiritually either eat His Flesh or drink His Blood although he may,

* Homily of St. Augustine, Bishop.

† *Ibid.*

carnally and visibly, press the sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood with his teeth: but rather he eateth and drinketh the sacrament of so great a thing to his own judgment seeing that he, unclean as he is, had presumed to approach Christ's sacraments which no one worthily receives unless he be clean —of whom it is said, 'Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God.'"

Thursday. Octave day of the feast.

"'As,' Christ says, 'the living Father hath sent me and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me.' It is as though he should say that 'I should live by the Father (that is should refer my life to Him as one greater), it was done by that emptying of Myself in which He sent Me. But that anyone live by Me, it is done by that participation whereby he eateth Me. I, therefore, being brought low, live by the Father; man, being raised up, liveth by Me.' But if the words, 'I live by the Father,' are taken in this sense —that the Son is of the Father and not the Father of the Son—they must be so taken as not lessening the equality (between Father and Son). And yet we are not to take those words, 'So he that eateth Me the same shall live by Me,' as meaning equality between Christ and ourselves—but they show the grace bestowed by Him in His office of Mediator."

With the conclusion of the octave, the special devotions to the sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist terminate. But the growth of devotion to this adorable mystery should never cease nor slacken in the Catholic heart. Its growth will depend upon the fervour with which we ask this grace of God and of the loving sacrifice we make of time, our comfort, and convenience in receiving Him in holy Communion, or visiting Him in the tabernacle. "Real devotion to the Blessed Sacrament is only gained by hard grinding work of dry adoration before the hidden God. But such a treasure cannot be purchased at too great a cost, for once it is

obtained, it makes this life as near an approach to heaven as we can ever hope for."*

FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART

THE Friday after the octave of Corpus Christi is dedicated by the Church to the Heart of Jesus, the symbol of His love for man. It was His love of man which caused the Word of God to be made flesh, and to suffer the death of the Cross. We know that Christ in His dealings with man had recourse ever to symbols and parables, which appealed to the eye and the imagination as well as to the soul of man ; and it is so with the symbol of His divine Heart. This was understood in the earliest ages by the saints and doctors of the Church. Thus St. Augustine writes, " The Evangelist made use of a word which has a special meaning when he said : ' The centurion opened Jesus' side with a spear.' He did not say ' struck or wounded the side,' or anything similar, but he said, ' he opened the side of Jesus.' He opened it, for that Side was like the door of life, and when it was opened, the sacraments (the mysteries) of the Church came through it." It was not, however, till the thirteenth century that our Lord made known to the two great Benedictine saints Gertrude and Mechtilde that He wished the faithful to venerate His adorable Heart in a special manner ; and not till the seventeenth century was drawing to its close that He revealed to St. Margaret Mary that He wished this devotion to be spread throughout the universal Church. It was on June 24th, 1675, that our Lord spoke these words to her, " Behold this Heart which so loved men that it shrank not from shedding its last drop in their behalf, and in return it seldom meets anything but ingratitude. Man ceases not to outrage Me by irreverence and ingratitude ; and what I feel still more deeply is the coldness with which such as are especially dedicated to My service treat Me in

* " Life of Fr. Doyle, S.J.," p. 111.

the Sacrament of My love." To make reparation for these insults, and atone for man's ingratitude, He told her to dedicate the first Friday after the octave of Corpus Christi specially to honouring His adorable Heart and to go to Communion on that day. In subsequent revelations He made the holy nun many promises to those who adopted and furthered this devotion: declaring that He would give them all the graces necessary for their state of life; that He would establish peace in their houses; comfort them in all their afflictions, and be their secure refuge during life, and, above all, in death. "Sinners shall find in My heart the source and the infinite ocean of mercy. Tepid souls shall grow fervent; fervent souls shall quickly rise to perfection. I will bless every place where a picture of My heart shall be set up and honoured. I will give to priests who practise and propagate this devotion the gift of touching the most hardened hearts, and to communities who adopt this devotion an increase of fervour." Also to those who communicated on the first Friday of the month for nine successive Fridays the grace that they should not die out of His favour.

Like all new devotions, the one to the Sacred Heart met with much opposition, but our Lord Himself foretold to St. Margaret Mary His sacred Heart would reign in spite of His enemies, and before her death she had the consolation of seeing it adopted by the Community of Paray-le-Monial, and a chapel built in honour of the symbol of divine Love. The name of the Venerable Claude de la Colombière, S.J., will always be associated with that of the Visitation nun, as he was one of the first to recognize the workings of the Holy Spirit in her soul, and, by becoming the first apostle of the Sacred Heart, he handed down the tradition of devotion to it to his Order, which has kept it up ever since. In 1720 the plague in its worst form broke out in Marseilles, carrying away tens of thousands of its inhabitants. God once more made use of a holy nun of the Visitation

Order, the Venerable Anne Madeleine Remusat, to acquaint the Bishop, Mgr. de Belzunce, with His Will,—which was that the diocese should be consecrated to the Sacred Heart. No sooner was this done than the scourge ceased. Two years later it broke out again, but on this occasion the city magistrates, yielding to the Bishop's persuasions, bound themselves and their successors by a solemn vow to certain acts of public worship. Since this was done the plague has never reappeared in Marseilles. In 1765 Rome issued the first decree in favour of a feast in honour of the Heart of Jesus, and approved of a Mass and Office drawn up for it in answer to a request made by the Bishops of Poland and the Arch-Confraternity in Rome. Nearly a hundred years later (1856) Pope Pius IX., at the instance of the French Hierarchy, decreed that the Feast should be inserted on the Calendar, and made its celebration obligatory throughout the Church.

We read in the introit of the Mass of this Feast these words full of comfort:

> "He will have mercy according to the multitude of His mercies; for He hath not willingly afflicted, nor cast off the children of men: The Lord is good to them that hope in Him; to the soul that seeketh Him. Alleluia. Alleluia."
>
> Ps. "The mercies of the Lord I will sing for ever: unto generation and generations."

The lesson is taken from the Book of Elias (ch. xii.).

> "I will give thanks to Thee, O Lord, for Thou wast angry with Me: Thy wrath is turned away and Thou hast comforted Me. Behold God is My Saviour; I will deal confidently and will not fear because the Lord is my strength and my praise, and He is become my salvation. Ye shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains,

and ye shall say in that day : Praise ye the Lord and call upon His name. Remember that His name is high. Sing ye unto the Lord for He hath done great things : show this forth in all the earth. Rejoice and praise, O thou habitation of Sion, for great is He that is in the midst of thee, the Holy One of Israel."

In the gradual we are told to meditate on the Love of Christ, and His anguish on account of man's ingratitude.

"O all ye that pass by the way attend and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow.

"Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end. Alleluia. Alleluia.

"Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart and ye shall find rest to your souls. Alleluia."

The gospel is from that according to St. John (ch. xix.), in which the beloved disciple tells how "one of the soldiers with a spear opened His side and immediately there came out blood and water."

The feast of St. Columba, the apostle of the Picts, is kept in Scotland on the 9th of June. He was born A.D. 521. His life was written within half a century of his death by Abbot Adamnan, so that we possess a more detailed record of it than we do of many of the early saints. He was born at Tyrconnel, and was noted from his youth for his piety and austerities. On reaching maturity he became a monk, but having got involved in the tribal warfares so common in those days, he was forced to fly from Ireland and take refuge in Scotland. His labours there for the spread of the faith were unceasing and blessed with marvellous success. He and his companions penetrated to the very North of Scotland,

making converts wherever they went, and preaching the Word of God. Many beautiful legends still linger in the spots graced by his presence. The village at the foot of Loch Ness bears still the name of Kilcumein (in Gaelic the Church of St. Cummin, his companion), and the country people attribute to St. Columba's blessing the fact that even in the severest winters the waters of Loch Ness are never frozen over. Adamnan relates that on one occasion when the saint and his companion were journeying up one of the Highland glens which give on to the lake, that he hurried his footsteps saying someone was in his last agony and required him. They came to a house, and having gained admittance found a dying man inside. St. Columba at once instructed him in the Christian faith, and at his earnest prayer he was baptized before his death. He established a hundred religious houses in different parts of Scotland. The Island of Iona was made over to him, and there he died in the choir surrounded by his monks, A.D. 597. Shortly before he breathed his last, he called his disciple Diermed to him and said, "This day is called the Sabbath, that is the day of rest; and such it will be to me, for it will see the end of my labours."

The feast of St. Margaret, the grand-daughter of a King of England and wife of Malcolm, King of Scotland, is kept on the 10th of this month. Her biographer Theotime—who was also her confessor—says that her name suited her well as it signifies pearl, "and such in truth she was." Though she was on fire with the love of God, her zeal was not of the kind that unfitted her for the gentle charities of life. She bore her husband eight children, and so great was his admiration for her virtues that she induced him to join in her exercises of piety and rise in the night to pray with her. When she first came to Scotland, she found the Scottish people and the Court very lax in the practice of keeping the Lord's day holy; and so untiring were her efforts to make them devote that day to God's service that the

strict manner in which Sunday is still observed in that country has been traced by scholars to the example and influence of this holy Queen rather than to the precepts of Knox and his followers. We read in her life that she was in the habit of reciting the seven Canonical hours in the Office of our Lady, and that on one occasion when on a journey, which was performed as was usual in those days on horseback, she asked for the Office book, it was missing. Search was made for it, and the book was found floating on a stream, and though the cover was wet not a letter of the brilliantly illuminated MS. was injured. She heard of her husband and eldest son's death—both killed in battle—while she was lying on her death-bed, and making an act of perfect resignation to the holy Will of God, she said that she accepted it in punishment for her sins. Her holy death took place in the year 1093.

The feast of the great miracle-worker, St. Anthony of Padua, is kept on June 13th. He was a Portuguese by birth; and attracted by what he heard of the poverty and austere life of the first followers of St. Francis and of their seraphic founder, he joined his Order. With some of his brethren he went to Africa to preach the Gospel to the Moors. He was disappointed there of his longing for martyrdom, and returning to Europe, he assisted at a general Chapter held by St. Francis at Assisi in 1221. Shortly afterwards, being ordered by his superior to preach, he astonished the world by his learning and eloquence, which was only equalled by his sanctity. From that time till his death nine years later, he was sent to preach Christ crucified in the towns and villages of Italy, and France, and wherever he went he performed marvellous miracles and brought souls to God. We read in his life that on one occasion he met with abuse and ill-treatment from an unruly mob headed by a man who was known to have committed every kind of infamy. The holy friar took all the insults heaped upon him with gentle serenity, and

moreover singled out the ringleader by special tokens of respect and deference. The man, furious at what he looked upon as an attempt to turn him into ridicule, asked him what he meant by such behaviour. St. Anthony explained: "God," he said, "has made known to me that you will be converted and become a priest, and moreover a martyr—shedding your blood for the faith." And so in truth it came to pass. What a lesson on holy charity! We may not be divinely enlightened about our neighbour; but if we, in spite of the sins we see in him, treated him as a possible saint, how many more souls would be led to God. He died in 1231.

St. Aloysius Gonzaga, whose feast is kept on the 21st of this month, is the special patron saint of youth. He dedicated himself to God from his earliest childhood; and so great was his purity that God permitted that he should be preserved by a special grace from even temptations against the angelical virtue. His father belonged to one of the great ruling families of Italy; but his court had no charms for Aloysius, and as soon as he grew up, he obtained his parents' consent to enter the ecclesiastical state. The Society of Jesus had then been recently founded; and our Lady appearing to him in a vision when he was hesitating as to what order he should join, told him that his vocation was to be a Jesuit. Whilst he was in the novitiate, having made his vows, a great epidemic broke out in Rome, and he at once volunteered to the post of danger. He caught the fever, and his life for a time was despaired of. Though he recovered temporarily, his health was undermined; and he died at the age of 23, A.D. 1591. Though his life had been a spotless one, Aloysius chastised his body rigorously by fasting and exercises of penance, and he was accustomed to say that no virtue was secure that was not founded on prayer and mortification.

The Church celebrates the feast of St. John the Baptist, the great Precursor of Christ, on the 24th of June.

We should do well on this day to study in the gospels, and especially in that of St. Luke, what the inspired writers have said about him. From the Gospel of St. Luke we learn that an Angel of the Lord appeared to Zachary and told him that the son who should be born to him "would be great before the Lord, and shall drink no wine nor strong drink, and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb. And he shall convert many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, that he may turn the hearts of the fathers unto the children, and the incredulous to the wisdom of the just, to prepare unto the Lord a perfect people." The next thing we are told of him was that "Zachary his father was filled with the Holy Ghost," and after prophesying the coming redemption of the People of Israel, he addressed him saying: "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways." Again, for the third time we read of the Holy Ghost (paving the way, as it were, for the Incarnation) coming this time on Elizabeth, so that she recognized in Mary the Mother of her Lord and God, and at the same moment the infant in her womb did homage to the presence of his Creator. Two virtues carried to heroic proportions distinguish this great saint. One is his spirit of detachment, the other his spirit of penance; and so pleasing were these to his divine Master that they earned for him that astounding panegyric from Christ's lips, that "amongst those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist." His life of penance and self-renunciation were consummated by his martyrdom under the reign of Herod.

FEAST OF ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL

THE Church keeps the feast of her glorious Founder—to which she joins the name of St. Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles—on the 29th of June, as a holiday of obligation. The gospels enable us to get a knowledge of St. Peter greater than we possess of any other apostle; in the first place, he was their spokesman; whilst they hesitated when our Lord asked the crucial question of them, "Whom do you say I am?" it was he, who, divinely inspired, answered: "Thou art Christ the Son of the living God." An answer which Christ rewarded with the promise: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." And again, when our Lord having declared that He would give His disciples His flesh to eat and His blood to drink, and by so saying was deserted by many, He said to the twelve, "Will you also go away?" And Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known that Thou art the Christ the Son of God." All through the holy narrative, we see our Lord singling out Peter from amongst the rest, sometimes to reprove him, more often to encourage him, or to warn him. It was to Peter that He spoke the memorable words after Peter had boasted: "Although I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee," and in like manner said they all, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not, and that thou being once converted confirm thy brethren." What an encouragement it is to the repentant sinner to learn from the gospel how Christ recalled none of His promises to Peter after his fall. One look, and can we doubt it was a look wholly of love?—from his divine Master, was sufficient to bring Peter to a repentance which lasted for the rest of his life. We

read in the Acts of the Apostles how St. Peter, after Christ's Ascension, assumed at once the post which his divine Master had committed to him, of head of His Church, and how his authority was confirmed by innumerable miracles. He established his seat of government in Rome, and after ruling the Church from thence for twenty-five years, he consummated his apostolic career by a glorious martyrdom. He was crucified, but conceiving himself unworthy of the same death as his Master, he persuaded his executioners to crucify him with his head downwards.

The name of St. Paul has ever been linked by holy Church with that of St. Peter. To St. Paul was given the mission of spreading the faith among the Gentiles. His conversion, which we read of in the Acts of the Apostles, was effected by no human intervention: it came directly from the Son of God Himself. When in answer to his question, "Who art thou, Lord?" he heard those words of power, "I am He whom thou persecutest," grace touched his heart, and from being a furious opponent of the Christian religion, he became an ardent follower of Christ. From that moment till his glorious martyrdom, Paul, by his apostolic labours, and his epistles, which are treasured by the Church as a legacy of inestimable value, earned his right to a place beside that of the Prince of the Apostles. According to ancient tradition, St. Paul suffered martyrdom by decapitation in Rome on the same day (some writers have said in the same year) as St. Peter. It was the custom of the Popes formerly to pontificate at the Basilica of St. Peter first and then proceed hence to that of St. Paul "*fuore le mura*"; but owing to the distance between the two basilicas which made the journey a fatiguing one, it became customary later to hold the feast of the Commemoration of St. Paul on the 30th of June.

On the Third Sunday after Pentecost holy Church,

in complete harmony with the Holy Ghost Who has been imparted to her (and Whom we are told is ever "helping our infirmity," and Himself asking for us with unspeakable groanings), directs our attention to the duty of prayer. In order that prayer should be pleasing to God, it must come from a contrite and humble heart, which, conscious of its sins and many infidelities, is yet full of love and confidence in God's mercy; accordingly she puts these words of the Royal Penitent in the mouth of her ministers at Mass :

> Introit. "Look thou upon me and have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am alone and poor, see my abjection and my labour and forgive me all my sins, O my God."
>
> Ps. "To Thee, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul : In Thee, O my God, I place my trust, let me not be ashamed. Glory," etc.
>
> Collect. "O God, the protector of those who hope in Thee ! without whose aid nothing is strong, nothing holy : increase thy mercy towards us that under thy direction and conduct, we may so pass through the blessings of this life, as not to lose those which are eternal. Through," etc.

The same teaching of humility and confidence is inculcated in the Epistle, which is taken from that of St. Peter (I., ch. v.).

"Dearly beloved, be ye humbled under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in the time of visitation. Casting all your care on him for he hath care of you." Trials of one kind or another—from the world, from our own kith and kin, from our individual character and circumstances, are the common lot of man. To accept them with patience and humility, acknowledging that we deserve them on account of our sins, is the way to make sure of our forgiveness. Thus only, relying on Christ's promises to all who take

up their cross and follow Him, may we hope to be raised to the dignity of children and faithful servants of God when we appear at the Judgment seat. For, the Apostle adds, " the God of all grace who hath called us into his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a little, will himself perfect you, and confirm and establish you. To him be glory and empire for ever and ever. Amen."

In the gospel (Luke, ch. xv.) we are again called upon to contemplate the God of all goodness and compassion in His dealings with man. For we read, " At that time the publicans and sinners drew near to hear him. And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them."

Let us stop a short while and dwell on those words, " This man receiveth sinners," for what consolation could be greater to the human soul than to remember that it was for sinners, such as we are, that the Son of man was born and suffered and died ; that it was them whom He attracted to His side during His public life ; for whom He had no word of reproof but only of love and compassion. And, moreover, He not only received them but fed with them, shared in their sorrows and their joys, lifted them up when they fell and comforted them. But this is not the only lesson our Lord would have us learn from this gospel. For He deigned to justify Himself to His accusers saying, " What man of you that hath a hundred sheep and if he shall lose one of them, doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after that which was lost until he find it." This parable was one so dear to the Christians of the primitive Church that the picture of Christ carrying the lost sheep back to the fold on His shoulders recurs constantly in the Catacombs. " For," as St. Ambrose writes, " who is the shepherd of our parable ? It is Christ who carries thee, O poor man, in His own body and has taken all thy sins upon Himself." And then he goes on to a further explanation of the meaning of the parable,

comparing mankind to the hundredth part of the great Shepherd's flock, and saying that He had left the Angels and Archangels, "and all other countless flocks in the mountain, in order that He might pursue the one sheep He had lost."

In the prayers and epistle and gospel of the Fourth Sunday after Pentecost, the virtue of holy hope and confidence in God's promises seems to be inculcated in an especial manner. How few even amongst those who make God's service the first object of their lives, trust Him as in truth He deserves to be trusted? With many if their heart's depths were searched it would be found that their trust was more in themselves than in God. "I hope to be saved as I am leading a good life," may indeed give us grounds for confidence; but it is not the supernatural virtue infused into our soul at baptism whereby we trust in God because He is God—infinite in goodness and power, and because His mercy is above all His works. Like the other two theological virtues of faith and charity, we should seek to increase it by constantly making acts of hope. "Sacred Heart of Jesus, I trust Thee," is an ejaculation which, if frequently made, will, as often as we make it, renew our faith in the love of God for man, which is the true and solid ground for hope and confidence in Him.

> Introit. "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? My enemies that trouble me have themselves been weakened and have fallen."
>
> Ps. "If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear. Glory," etc.

The epistle is taken from that of St. Paul to the Romans (ch. xiii.). The apostle in this sublime epistle holds up for our encouragement the immensity of the

reward that awaits us. "I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed to us." Christ redeemed the world by a life of ignominy culminating in the sufferings of His Passion and death on the Cross, and the closer man's union with Him, the more deeply will he be called upon by His Master to drink of His chalice: thus "we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption of the sons of God, the redemption of our body in Christ Jesus our Lord."

In the gospel, which is according to St. Luke (ch. v.), we read how "when the multitude pressed upon him to hear the word of God," Jesus, "going into one of the ships that was Simon's, taught them. And when He ceased to speak, He said to Simon: Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon said to Him, Master, we have laboured all night and taken nothing, but at Thy word I will let down the net. And when they had done this, they enclosed a very great multitude of fishes." What a lesson upon holy hope! a hope resting on confidence in God's word, in spite of adverse experience and worldly wisdom. So must we persevere in our prayers, in our intercession for sinners; in our ardent desires that the Kingdom of God may come, and in the end we shall reap abundantly, "not failing."

The epistle and gospel for the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost are both directed towards one object—that of enforcing the great truth that the love of God, and our service of Him, are inseparably bound up with our love and service of our neighbour.

The epistle is taken from that of St. Peter (I., ch. iii.). What a solemn warning these words convey:

> "Dearly beloved, Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, being lovers of the brotherhood, merciful, modest, humble: not

> rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing: for unto this ye are called that ye may inherit a blessing. For he that loves life and would see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips that they speak no guile. Let him decline from evil and do good; let him seek after peace and pursue it, because the eyes of the Lord are upon the just and His ears unto their prayers; but the countenance of the Lord against them that do evil things."

It is, therefore, in being a source of benediction to our neighbour by our merciful, modest, humble demeanour towards him that we shall earn the blessing of our good and merciful God. Without it we may look in vain for that blessing upon which our happiness and success in life depend. As our Lord has said elsewhere, with the measure we mete to our neighbour, it shall be measured to us; and again, Blessed are the merciful for they shall find mercy.

The gospel is taken from the fifth chapter of St. Matthew.

> "At that time Jesus said to His disciples: Unless your justice exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Ye have heard that it was said to them of old, Thou shalt not kill. And whoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment."

Of how many Catholics who make profession of faith, it might be said that in point of charity they were little better than their non-Catholic, possibly even their unbelieving neighbours. It is to them that these words are addressed, for it was to His disciples that Christ spoke them. And He emphasized them in the concluding

words of the gospel : " Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar and there shall remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift."

In the epistle for the Sixth Sunday after Pentecost (Rom. ch. vi.) St. Paul puts before us in vivid terms what baptism should mean to Christ's followers.

> " Brethren, all we who are baptised in Christ Jesus are baptised in His death. For we are buried together with Him by baptism unto death ; that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father so we may also walk in newness of life."

In meditating on these words of deep meaning, we might note two points : (1) At what cost to our divine Saviour this astounding mystery of the goodness of God, whereby the Kingdom of God was opened to us, was purchased ; (2) and how lightly we look upon the duties and consequences that it entails. In receiving this august sacrament, whether as a child or an adult, we at once enter into possession of the whole inheritance of which we were deprived by the sin of our first parents. For it was to His death on the Cross that the holy prophet alluded when he spoke those pathetic words, " Thou art He who wilt restore My inheritance to me." Our inheritance and the grace of God of which original sin had deprived us have indeed been restored ; but it is on condition that rising from death in Christ, " we should walk in newness of life." What this newness of life is holy Church puts before us very distinctly in the promises made for the infant by proxy in the sacrament of baptism. It means renouncing Satan, and the pride and disobedience to God's laws by which he tempted and deluded Adam and Eve, " knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him." We cannot grasp this fact too firmly, for on it depends the whole structure of our

spiritual life ; for it is only thus that we shall share in our divine Saviour's glorious resurrection and be (in the words with which the epistle concludes) " alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The gospel gives us an account of our Lord's miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes taken from the Gospel of St. Mark (ch. viii.). It begins with the words, so full of compassion, of our Lord's : " At that time, when there was a great multitude with Jesus and had nothing to eat, calling His disciples together, He saith to them, I have compassion on the multitude, for behold they have now been with me three days and have nothing to eat, and if I send them away fasting to their own home, they will faint in the way : for some of them come afar off."

St. Ambrose has a very beautiful homily on this Sunday's gospel ; and in it he makes the following suggestive remark : " It is not to the slothful, nor to them that live in cities, nor to them that are great in the world's honours, but to them that seek Christ in the desert, that is given the heavenly nourishment ; they only who hunger after it are received by Christ into a participation of the Word and of God's Kingdom."

In the epistle for the Seventh Sunday after Pentecost (ch. vi.) St. Paul follows up the same train of thought which we had put before us for our instruction last Sunday. He insists again on the great truth that those who have received the gift of faith, and have died in Christ, and consequently risen with Him, should show forth this transformation by a change of life, " For as ye have yielded your members to serve uncleanness and iniquity unto iniquity, so now yield your members to serve justice unto sanctification. . . But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto sanctification and the end life everlasting. For the wages of sin is death, but the grace of God, life everlasting in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The gospel, which is according to that of St. Matthew,

gives us our Lord's solemn warning against the false prophets whom He foresaw would ere long—in future ages—devastate His Church and rend its unity. What cause for reflection these words: "By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?" should give to those who abandon "the faith once delivered to saints" to follow the last craze in religions. And what a deep lesson to all of us is contained in the concluding words of this day's gospel:

> "Not everyone that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the will of My Father who is in Heaven, he shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

It will avail us little at the last day if we have professed the true faith, and spent hours on our knees, if we have not lived in the spirit of the Gospel, and denied ourselves and taken up our cross and followed Jesus.

Amongst the feasts which the Roman martyrology holds out for our veneration in July is that of St. Pachomius, Abbot. He was born early in 300 A.D., in Egypt of pagan parents. He was forced to join the Imperial troops, Egypt being then under Roman sway, but passing on his way a village on the Nile, he was treated there with the utmost kindness and hospitality, and discovering the cause that being Christians they hoped for a reward in a world to come, he longed to know about their religion. When he was once more free, he put himself under a Christian teacher and embraced the faith. Then hearing of the great renown for sanctity of the solitary Palemon, he went to him to learn the way of perfection. Putting himself under the guidance of the holy man, he shared his life, which was one of the greatest

austerity. Their only food was bread and water, which they only partook of once a day, in winter once in two days. Their days and nights were spent in labour and prayer. One hour of sleep at night sufficed for rest, and this Pachomius took sitting upright. By divine revelation, though he knew no one and had no disciples, he started building a monastery in the desert. Before long numbers flocked to it, and an Angel was sent to Him to give him a rule of life. Detachment from self and humility were the two principal virtues in which he trained his disciples. One of his sayings was : " To live in great simplicity and in a wise ignorance, is to be exceedingly wise." Another was, " Men look for miracles as a sign of sanctity ; I prefer a solid and interior humility to raising the dead." He worked many miracles and enjoyed astounding supernatural gifts. His holy death took place in 348.

St. John Gualbert, whose feast is kept on the 12th of July, owed his conversion to an act of mercy and forgiveness. He was a Florentine, and as he was born in the end of the tenth century when Florence was a prey to civil disorder, his early manhood was a stormy one. There was a blood-feud between him and one of his kinsmen, and on one occasion when he was well armed and accompanied by a troop of retainers, he came on to his adversary who, being alone and defenceless, was at his mercy. It was Good Friday ; and the wretched man, reminding Gualbert that it was the day on which Christ died for sinners, implored him to spare his life. An impulse of grace caused Gualbert to consent ; and entering into the church of St. Miniato which was close by, he knelt before the crucifix and asked for pardon for his own sins. The Head of our Lord bent towards him in token of forgiveness. Soon afterwards he renounced the world and joined the Benedictine Order. He founded the Monastery of Vallombrosa, and after a life of great austerity and one distinguished for his zeal for the Church, in particular for the reform of abuses, he died a

holy death whilst the angels were heard to sing round his bed, A.D. 1073.

St. Vincent de Paul's feast is kept on the 19th of July. He was born in 1576 of humble parents, who, perceiving his strong attraction to the priesthood, made great sacrifices to enable him to follow out his vocation. Soon after he was ordained, whilst he was making a short sea-voyage, the boat he was in was attacked by pirates and he was sold in Barbary as a slave. He succeeded in converting his master, who was a renegade; and together they returned to France. St. Vincent's attraction was to a missionary life, and especially to the service of the poor, the ignorant and the suffering; but in obedience to Cardinal Berulle, his director, he gave up this life to become tutor and chaplain to the de Gondi family. De Gondi was General of the Galleys, a man of great wealth and position, and his wife was a woman of great piety and generosity. It was in consequence of the experience he gained in his connection with this family, and of a large sum of money bequeathed to him by Mme. De Gondi as a foundation for a missionary college, that he was able to carry out a long-cherished scheme of starting a congregation of priests who would devote their lives to preaching and giving retreats. St. Vincent's compassion for the sufferings of the bodies as well as of the souls of the poor and neglected, led him to found a confraternity of Ladies of Charity for the succour of the poor in their own houses. He found a powerful co-adjutor in Mdlle. Le Gras, now better known as B. Louise de Marillac, and it was under her fostering care and St. Vincent's guidance that the company of Sisters of Charity which has since spread all over the globe and numbers over 30,000 members, came into existence. St. Vincent's name is especially connected with founding hospitals, and with work for the galley slaves; but there was no form of human misery for which he did not seek to devise a remedy and to procure some alleviation. The civil war of the Fronde brought great suffering,

accompanied by famine and pestilence on France, but wherever want and misery showed itself the priests of the Mission and Sisters of Charity were to be found working side by side to alleviate it. The leading feature of St. Vincent's interior life was his entire conformity with the Divine Will. He never began any work of importance without months, and in some cases years, of prayer for God's guidance, and consultation with holy men on whose judgment he relied. One of his sayings to his spiritual children was that "Perfection consists in accepting all that comes to us, joys, pains, or sorrows, for the love of God." Another, that those who loved the poor in life need have no fears in death. His holy life was prolonged to a great age: he died in A.D. 1660.

Holy Church has ever held out the example of St. Mary Magdalen, whose feast is on the 22nd of July, as a model of a true penitent. Our Lord in those tender words, "Many sins are forgiven her for she hath loved much," and "Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee," pointed out to all times the path by which the sinful creature regains the favour of her Creator. Love, and ever more love, is His due Who died for love of man. Let us therefore imitate Magdalen in her love, and in the way she showed it: that is by our prodigality in His service, and our fidelity. Mary clung to her divine Master to the last, when all abandoned Him except His Mother and the beloved disciple, and so earned the reward of being the first to see Him after His Resurrection, and to be His messenger to the disciples—telling them that He was about to ascend to His Father and their Father, and to His God and their God. It was in consequence of this sublime mission that the Credo is said at Mass on this feast; an honour conferred on no other woman except the Blessed Virgin.

The feast of St. James the Apostle is celebrated on the 25th. We know from the gospels that he and his brother St. John were sons of Zebedee, a fisherman, for they received the call to leave all and follow Jesus when mending

their nets on the Sea of Galilee. St. James was one of the chosen three who were witness of our Lord's Transfiguration and of His Agony in the Garden. He was the first of the apostles to shed his blood for the faith, and so to drink the chalice with his divine Master. His relics repose at Compostella, which in the middle ages was next in popular favour and devotion as a place of pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and the tombs of the apostles in Rome.

St. Anne, whose feast occurs on July 26th, has ever been the object of love and devotion to the Catholic heart as the mother of her who gave birth to the world's Redeemer. She and her husband, St. Joachim, dedicated the child of their old age to the service of the Temple, and the reward they had for this sacrifice was that in due time the Lord of the Temple took flesh in her chaste womb. St. Anne is the special patron of mothers and mistresses of household, and should be invoked by all who wish for peace in their houses.

St. Ignatius of Loyola, whose feast falls on the 31st July, was born in Spain in 1491 A.D. He was a soldier by profession ; but being wounded at the age of thirty at the siege of Pampeluna, and having no books to read whilst condemned to a sick bed, except lives of saints, his imagination was fired by the mighty deeds of these Christian heroes. Grace did the rest, and when cured of his wounds he renounced an earthly leader in order to follow after his " fair Captain Christ." His apprenticeship, so to speak, to his new profession was long and severe. He spent the first year after his conversion in a cave near Manresa, living on alms and practising great austerities, and giving his days and nights to prayer. It was here that he was comforted by a vision of our Lady : also that he began to note down his experiences in the interior life whence he drew up, later on, his " Spiritual Exercises." He next went to Palestine to visit the Holy Places, and then returning to Spain and realizing that his want of learning would interfere with his usefulness as a labourer in God's

vineyard, he devoted himself to study for the space of eleven years; first at Barcelona and then in the Universities of Alcala and Salamanca and finally in that of Paris. In all these places he had to submit to persecutions and false accusations, at which he rejoiced as his one desire was to resemble his divine Master. In Paris he was joined by St. Peter Faber, St. Francis Xavier, Laynez, Salmeron and others; and he and they took the vows of poverty and chastity on the feast of the Assumption, 1534, and were ordained three years later on the feast of St. John the Baptist. Ignatius' great desire, in order that his life and that of his followers should resemble as much as possible that of our Lord, was to follow His footsteps in Palestine; but owing to an outbreak of war that plan was frustrated. He then offered his services to the Pope, and he was on his way to Rome when he received a striking vision. He saw the Eternal Father, who appeared to be associating him with His Son, and He heard the words, "I will be propitious to you in Rome." He was well received by Julius III., and henceforth the Eternal City was to be the scene of his labours. There he drew up the constitutions of the Order—ever afterwards to be known as the Society of Jesus; it was approved of in 1540. The rest of his life was spent in retirement; his time being wholly occupied with the affairs of his Order, and in his intercourse with God in prayer in which he received abundant supernatural favours and graces. His holy death took place on the 31st of July, 1556. To aspire to as close a resemblance as is possible to fallen nature to their divine Master; like Him to fly honours and court humiliations and persecutions for justice' sake; to obey their superiors, seeing Christ in them, even as He obeyed His heavenly Father, unto the death of the Cross; finally to do all A.M.D.G. were the aims put by this great saint before his disciples in the rules of the Jesuit Order. And to these they have closely adhered ever since.

The epistle for the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost is like those of the three preceding Sundays taken from St. Paul's to the Romans (ch. viii.). They contain the very essence of Christianity :

> " Brethren, we are debtors not to the flesh according to the flesh. For if ye live according to the flesh, ye shall die, but if by the Spirit, ye mortify the deeds of the flesh, ye shall live. For whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry Abba Father. For the Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God. And if sons, heirs also, heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ."

Who can read these glorious inspired words without being filled with gratitude for the gift which exceeds in greatness all others : that of the Holy Ghost ? No wonder Christ, speaking of it to His apostles, said, " It is expedient that I should go," for it is by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in our purified souls that we enter into the whole heritage of grace in this world, with the certain pledge of glory in the world to come, which was purchased for us by the Passion and Death of our Lord.

The Gospel is that of the unjust steward ; to whom His Lord and Master spoke the terrifying words, " Give an account of thy stewardship for now thou canst be steward no longer." The means that the steward used to provide for himself after his dismissal seem on the surface in the highest degree dishonest. But we know that the sense in which Christ's words were to be understood was frequently hidden except to those whose intelligence had been opened by grace to interpret them aright. It would seem as if He wished us to dig

for the meaning ; to puzzle over it, and then—humbly owning our ignorance—ask of Him (as His disciples did) or of His Church what we are to understand by His words or actions. Thus He who was Justice itself compares Himself to the unjust judge who was conquered by the importunity of the widow who cried unceasingly to him " to avenge her of her adversary." And again He curses the barren fig-tree though it was not the season for the tree to bear fruit. In all these cases our Lord had a deep lesson to convey to His disciples, and He who was the incarnate Wisdom, saw that it would sink more profoundly into their hearts because of its apparent contradiction with what they were accustomed to believe. In this gospel our Lord Himself points out the meaning in the concluding verse, " I say to you make friends of the mammon of iniquity that when ye shall fail they may receive you into everlasting dwellings " (Luke, ch. xvi.). It is of our riches, our worldly power and influence, that we shall have to render a strict account before the judgment seat of God ; and we should imitate the children of this world in their diligence and astuteness in providing against the awful day of reckoning.

In the epistle for the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost (I. Cor. ch. x.) St. Paul dwells in vivid terms on the ingratitude and repeated falls of the Chosen People, and warns his beloved children in Christ that they will succumb in the same way unless they put on the armour of God, which is humility. " Wherefore let him that thinketh himself to stand, take heed lest he fall. . . . And God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which ye are able, but will make also with temptation issue that ye may be able to bear it." Distrust of self and confidence in God are the surest passport to the heavenly kingdom : with them we may safely avoid the pitfalls of life.

The gospel is taken from the touching passage in St. Luke's Gospel (ch. xix.), in which it is recorded of our

Lord that He wept over Jerusalem. It is a picture that painters have loved to depict; we also can see it in imagination—the figure of Jesus the all-merciful, the lover of mankind Who had come to seek and to save, and below Him the doomed city lying in its beauty with its splendid towers and pinnacles bathed in the noonday sun. And then we can turn to the other picture, seen in the Son of God's prophetic eye—and of which we can form some idea from the pages of the historian Josephus—of the horrors which befell its inhabitants "because they had not known the time of their visitation." Such, or rather more bitter still, will be the fate of the soul who, turning a deaf ear to her Saviour's pleadings, gives herself up to a life of sin and dies without repentance.

The epistle of St. Paul for the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost is taken from his first to the Corinthians (ch. xii.). In those words which occur in it, "And no man can say the Lord Jesus but by the Holy Ghost," a great lesson is conveyed to us. How many complain that they cannot keep their minds from wandering when they pray vocally or meditate! But do they invoke the Holy Ghost, and reflect that without the grace of God not one step towards God is possible nor any advance in His service? We read of St. Ignatius that he never went into a church, even to make a passing visit to the B. Sacrament, without pausing for a moment to call to mind who he was—a sinner—and to whom he was going to speak: the God of Heaven and earth.

In the gospel holy Church puts before us the parable which Jesus spoke "to some who trusted in themselves and despised others":

> "Two men went up to the Temple to pray; the one was a Pharisee and the other a publican. The Pharisee standing, prayed thus within himself: O God, I give Thee thanks that I am not as the

> rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as also is this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican standing afar off, would not so much as lift his eyes towards heaven, but struck his breast saying: O God, be merciful to me a sinner. I say to you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other, because everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

The reason that pride is so hateful in the sight of God is that it is opposed to the two virtues which are most pleasing to Him, truth and charity. The proud man is a living lie. "One only is good, God," is the word of truth Itself. Why? Because of ourselves we are nothing but sin and misery; whatever is good in us comes from God and is the effect of divine grace. So that, as St. Augustine says, God in rewarding us crowns His own gifts. Pride is equally opposed to charity, as its effect is to cause us to despise others. Prayer with such dispositions of the heart is a mockery of God: as on the other hand, to approach Him in the spirit of the publican owning that we are nothing, have nothing and can do nothing without Him, is the way to make our prayer perfectly pleasing and acceptable in His sight.

In the epistle for the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost (I. Cor. ch. xv.) St. Paul after recounting the salient facts on which the Christian religion is founded, how Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried and that He rose again the third day, goes on to say in the concluding verses, "And last of all, He was seen also by me, as one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles who am not worthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the Church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am and His grace in me hath not been void." Here we see the perfection of humility, which so far from

being made at the expense of truth, enhances it. The holy apostle, looking back on his past life, acknowledges that he is not worthy to be an apostle and because he humbled himself below all the rest in the eternal designs, he was called to the great office of Apostle of the Gentiles and his name will for ever be linked with that of Peter in the official acts of the Church of God. On the other hand, recognizing that it is no part of true humility to minimize the great gifts of God, he recognizes them simply and truthfully—referring them to their source : the grace of God.

The gospel is taken from that of St. Mark (ch. vii.) in which he relates how our Saviour healed the man who was deaf and dumb. And the narrative ends with the words spoken by the multitude : " He hath done all things well : He hath made both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak."

Jesus Christ is not changed, nor ever can change. For it was said of Him, " Jesus Christ yesterday, and to-day, and the same for ever." If it is so, why does He not answer us when we pray that we may hear His voice speaking to our souls ; or that we may know how to speak to Him, as His favoured children speak to Him, when we come to Him in prayer and at holy Communion ? Is it not because we have not the faith of the simple people who followed Him in crowds asking to be healed ? Or is it, possibly, because we do not, as they did, put our whole heart into our prayer. Do we realize how the friends of the deaf and dumb man must have begged and entreated Jesus to take pity on him and cure him ; and the powerful appeal that the sight of the man who could only show by signs his longing to be cured must have made to His compassionate heart. So should we importune the Heart of Jesus.

The feast of St. Dominic, founder of the Order of Friar Preachers, is celebrated on the 4th of August.

His parents, as in the case of so many saints, were remarkable for their piety, and from his birth Dominic manifested that he was in a special manner marked out by divine Providence as one called to eminent sanctity. He was born in 1170, and in 1184 he began his studies at the University of Palencia, and for ten years he pursued them with unremitting diligence —interrupted only by long hours which he gave to prayer. After his ordination he was made member of the Cathedral Chapter, which was much in need of reform; and his success in this respect drew the attention of the Bishop of Palencia, who in consequence chose him to accompany him on an embassy to the Danish Court. On their way thither, they passed through Toulouse, which was the centre of the sect of Albigenses, and were witnesses of the moral and social disorders which that sect had wrought on the inhabitants. Filled with compassion for their unfortunate plight, and, doubtless also led by the Spirit of God, Dominic determined to devote himself to their conversion. After the conclusion of the Bishop's mission in 1204, he went to Rome and put himself under the orders of Pope Innocent III., who associated him with the Cistercians to preach in Languedoc, where the Albigenses were very numerous and powerful. Dominic made Prouille his headquarters, and in 1206 he established a convent of nuns there with the object of using their influence for good on the women of the district—who were as violent as the men in their adherence to the heresy—at the same time availing himself of their prayers for the conversion of the people. The rest of his life was spent in preaching; and as a preparation for the apostolic work and to bring down a blessing on it, he spent his days and nights in prayer and practised the most incredible austerities. Though so hard on himself, he was noted (as all his contemporaries testify) for his kindness and charity to others. He placed the greatest confidence in the intercession

of the B.V. Mary, and we owe to him the devotion of the Rosary. He founded the Order of Friar Preachers (or Dominicans), which received the sanction of Pope Honorius in 1216. His labours for the Faith only ceased with his life, and were rewarded with astounding success. It is said that he brought no less than 100,000 souls into the Church by his preaching and his miracles. He gave up his holy soul to God, A.D. 1221.

The feast of St. Clare is kept on the 12th of August. She was born at Assisi in 1212. She received a call from God to give up all and follow Him when but a child; and as soon as she had reached years of discretion, she went to St. Francis at the Church of the Portiuncula, who clothed her in the same habit of sackcloth as that worn by his friars and received her into the second Order founded for women, which bore ever afterwards the name of that of the Poor Clares. Poverty was their distinguishing mark, as it was of their heavenly Spouse and of His faithful follower, the seraphic saint. Their first convent, S. Damiano, was but a hovel, and yet, so great is the attraction of sanctity and self-renunciation that many noble ladies flocked to it. Clare's young sister joined her at the age of fourteen, and later on her mother. It is said that when St. Clare was reproached with the too great poverty of the life she led, she replied, "How can they be called poor who possess God in their hearts?" Once when the convent was threatened by a Saracen army in the pay of Frederick II., St. Clare took the monstrance containing the sacred Host, and confronted the leaders with it; and they fled panic-struck. She died in the year 1253, as the Passion was being read; and our Lady and the Angels took her soul into Paradise.

THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE B. VIRGIN MARY

The chief document on which the tradition of our Lady's bodily ascension—or assumption—into Heaven rests is a letter of St. John of Damascus (P.G., I., 96), where it is said: "St. Juvenal, Bishop of Jerusalem, at the Council of Chalcedon (451) made known to the Emperor Marcian and Pulcheria, who wished to possess the body of the Mother of God, that Mary died in the presence of all the apostles, but that her tomb when opened at the request of St. Thomas was found empty, wherefrom the apostles concluded that the body was taken to Heaven." It is according to Pope Benedict XIV. "a probable opinion; to deny it would be impious and blasphemous." This belief is universal both in the East and West. The Assumption is looked upon as the principal feast of the Blessed Mother of God, and is everywhere celebrated as a holiday of obligation.

The lessons and antiphons of the divine Office for this feast are drawn largely from the Canticle of Canticles and from Ecclesiasticus, in which are foreshadowed the glories of the future Mother of the Incarnate Word.

The lesson at Mass is taken from the prophecy of the Son of Sirach (Ecclus. xxiv.).

> "In all things I sought rest and I shall abide in the inheritance of the Lord. Then the Creator of all things commanded and said to me: and He that made me rested in my tabernacle."

What a marvellous privilege was Mary's! For as the Church exclaims in her Office: "Thou didst give birth to Him Who made thee and to all eternity dost remain a virgin."

The gospel is taken from that of St. Luke (ch. x.). The Church has never ceased defending the cause of those who are called to a contemplative life in our Lord's own words, "Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her." And as we are given to understand from her applying them to the ever-blessed Virgin, she does not exclude in her interpretation of them those who are not called to a cloistered life. All those whose lives are hidden with Christ in God have chosen the best part. The missionary who goes forth from his cell armed with the Word of God to preach to the heathen, has chosen it. So also has the Sister of Charity whose cell is the hospital and whose cloister is the home of the poor. St. Catherine of Siena chose the better part when, inspired by God, she crossed the sea to adjure Pope Gregory at Avignon to return to Rome, as St. Frances did leading a life of heroic service of the poor and the sick in her husband's palace in Rome. To submit to the ruling of God's providence; to look to His holy Will and see and obey it in all the events of life; above all to lead a life of prayer and interior recollection, is to earn the reward given to those who, like Mary, have chosen the best part.

The feast of St. Bernard occurs on the 20th of August. Providence destined him to a great work, that of bringing back the Benedictine Order to its primitive fervour, and of remedying many abuses which had crept into the Church, by his preaching, teaching and ascetical works. He joined the Order at Citeaux in the year 1113, being then twenty-three years old. Citeaux, the seat of the reform, was founded in 1090 by St. Robert, and St. Stephen, its third abbot, had just been appointed when Bernard, with thirty young nobles of Burgundy, sought admittance. In 1115 he was sent by St. Stephen to found the Abbey of Clairvaux—a name which will ever be associated with Bernard's own—and of which he was made Abbot. His reforms were of such a severe nature that later on he was prevailed upon by William of

Champeaux to mitigate them. Notwithstanding the rigour of the observance, numbers flocked to Clairvaux to place themselves under his direction ; amongst these were his five brothers, and finally his old father. From his monastery of Clairvaux, Bernard exercised by the ascendency of his character, his writings and sermons and above all of his sanctity, an influence which was almost world-wide over his contemporaries. His success in controversy was shown by his crushing refutation of the errors of Abelard, which (according to Ratisbonne) "forms the greatest episode of the twelfth century." The last years of his life were clouded by the failure of the Crusade to free the Holy Land from the Mohammedans, an enterprise into which he had thrown himself heart and soul. His holy death took place in 1153. He left many volumes of sermons, and some remarkable treatises on the monastic and ascetic life, and was numbered among the Doctors of the Church by Pius VIII.

St. Jane Frances de Chantal, whose feast is kept on August the 21st, has ever been held out as an example of fidelity to the call of God. She was born in 1572 ; her father, M. Fremyot, was a staunch Catholic, and for long President of the Parliament at Dijon ; and having lost his wife when Jane was very young, he did his best to supply her place, giving her a solid and religious training and education. She married the Baron de Chantal in 1592. Their short married life was a very happy one, only marred by occasional separations, when de Chantal was summoned to the battlefield or to the Court. On these occasions his wife used to devote herself entirely to the service of God ; and she told Mother de Chaugy afterwards that when M. de Chantal was away she thought of nothing but God, and when he was at home she could think of nothing but him. His premature death in 1601, caused by an accidental shot from a friend, left Jane Frances a widow with four children, and from having been the most exemplary

of wives, she became a pattern of widows, devoting herself entirely to God, her duties to her children and the service of the poor. Her acquaintance with St. Francis de Sales, who was later on to be the moving power of her life, began in 1604. He became her director in 1605, and he was not long in discovering that God intended her for the religious life, and that she was to be a heaven-sent instrument in his hands to found the Order of the Visitation. Much prayer went to the foundation of this holy Institute, for St. Francis took no step without consulting the divine Will, and a tranquillity, based on confidence in God, was one of his chief characteristics. Difficulties which at first seemed insuperable were solved in time: Mme. de Chantal's eldest daughter married the Baron de Thorens; she confided her only son, a youth of fourteen, to his grandfather; and, on the 6th of June, 1610, taking her two young daughters with her, she joined her companions, who under the holy Bishop of Geneva's direction had resolved to embrace the religious life, at Annecy. The anguish she felt in parting with her son was enhanced by the latter, with a boy's impetuosity, throwing himself in front of the door through which she had to pass, and saying if she must go, it would be over his body. God only knows what it cost her to do so, but He Who had imposed the sacrifice on her, gave her grace and courage to carry it out. Henceforth her life was one entirely consecrated to God. The Visitation Order was canonically established in 1610; and when St. Francis, after guiding its counsels for twelve years, departed to his eternal reward in 1622, it numbered thirteen houses, which were increased to eighty-six before the death of its holy Foundress. The last nine years of St. Jane Frances' life were years of great interior trial; this she endured, as she had done all the previous ones, in the spirit of the valiant woman, and with a heart entirely conformed to that of her divine Spouse. Many miracles were worked by her both before and after her death in

1641, and St. Vincent de Paul saw her soul borne up to Heaven under the appearance of a globe of fire.

The feast of the apostle St. Bartholomew is celebrated by the Church on the 24th. He is generally identified with Nathaniel—strong reasons are adduced for doing so by biblical scholars. The story of Nathaniel's call is a very beautiful one, as told in St. John's gospel. He was a friend of Philip's, for as soon as the latter had discovered in Jesus the promised Messiah, he told Nathaniel, and bade him come and see Him.

" Jesus saw Nathaniel coming to him, and saith of him : Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile. Nathaniel saith to him : Whence knowest thou me ? Jesus answered and said to him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee. Nathaniel answered Him and said : Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said to him : Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, thou believest : greater things than these thou shalt see. And He said to him, Amen, Amen, I say to you, you shall see the heaven opened and the Angels of God ascending and descending upon the son of man " (ch. i.). Tradition, which reaches as far back as the second century, relates that he preached the Gospel in India and met his death by a cruel martyrdom, being either crucified, or flayed alive, by order of Astyages, Governor of Armenia.

The feast of the great St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, is kept on the 28th of August. The power of prayer, fervent and unintermitting, and above all of a mother's prayers, was never more strikingly demonstrated than in Augustine's case, for in him pride of intellect and strong passions indulged since early manhood opposed an almost invincible barrier to grace. The story of his conversion first from the errors of Manichæism, and then to an entire reformation of life, should be read in his own words in his " Confessions " ; a work of genius in which, as its title declares, Augustine gives praise and

thanks to God for his deliverance from sin and the powers of darkness. He was baptized at Easter, A.D. 387, at the age of thirty-three. He was not ordained till 391, and he became Bishop of Hippo five years later, and occupied the See for thirty-four years till his holy death in 430. Catholics, and non-Catholics of every denomination, are agreed in looking upon St. Augustine as one of the greatest lights of the Christian Church. Peter the Venerable sums up in the words that Augustine ranked next to the apostles an opinion which was held generally by the faithful in the Middle Ages. Harnack, the Lutheran, says of him : " Even to-day we live by Augustine, by his thought and his spirit." And though the Reformers tried to claim him as a supporter by his views on divine grace, the learned Schaff admits that "he anticipated the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, and his ominous words, *Roma locuta est, causa finita est,* might almost be quoted in favour of the Vatican decree of Papal infallibility." In this great saint and Doctor of the Church, we see equally developed qualities of mind and heart, and both carried to the utmost perfection. His was a heart on fire with the love of God, and it gave a power to his written word and also to his spoken word—as we learn from his contemporaries—which has seldom been equalled and never surpassed. The cry of his soul may be heard in the sublime words :

" O ! amare ; O ! ire ; O ! sibi perire ; O ! ad Deum pervenire."

The epistle of the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost is taken from the first of St. Paul's to the Corinthians (ch. iii.). It begins with the consoling words that we should take confidence through Christ towards God, " Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God." The example of the saints would teach us this much, should

we be disposed to doubt it, that humility (*i.e.*, distrust of ourselves) should never lead to down-heartedness, or want of enterprise in God's service. The courage of the saints fills us with wondering admiration because it had its source in God and not in themselves.

The gospel, which is taken from St. Luke (ch. x.), gives us our divine Saviour's answer to "a certain lawyer," who stood up tempting him, saying, "Master, what must I do to possess eternal life." We all know the answer, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength and with all thy mind," but do we realize as we should do, as our Lord means us unquestionably to know, that our judgment will turn upon it as upon no other commandment, and consequently that we must obey it in order "to possess Eternal Life?" In the first place, in what should the love of God consist? We know it need not mean sensible love, such as a mother feels for her child, a lover for the object of his affections. Such love we may feel at times, but we cannot command it, for it is a gift of God and an effect of His grace. On the other hand, we must (spiritual writers tell us) have a love of preference which enables us—God helping—to be ready to sacrifice what we hold dearest rather than offend Him by grievous sin. A soul intent on God's service, however, will never be satisfied with a niggardly return, dictated by self-interest, for the love which the Son of God has poured out with such prodigality on her by His Incarnation and death on the Cross. The only adequate return she can make is by an ever-increasing love. Accordingly theology puts before us three steps, as it were, by which the soul ascends to a closer union with God as her love of Him becomes purer and more detached from self. By the first, the love of concupiscence, we love God for the happiness and good we find in Him, because we desire to possess Him Who is the Source of all good, our beginning and last end. By the second, the love of complacency, the

soul rejoices and gives thanks to God for His great glory —rejoicing that He can receive adequate praise and glory from Himself alone. This leads to a third, which is the love of benevolence, in which the soul calls upon all creation, men and angels and inanimate creatures, to praise and glorify God, and even wishes for impossible things whereby the glory of God might be increased. That such acts of disinterested love are very pleasing to God, we know by the teaching of the Church and the revelations of the saints. But as to-day's gospel reminds us, our love of God must ever be linked with the love of our neighbour. In St. Catherine of Siena's *Dialogo*, the Holy Spirit speaking through her gives us some very deep thoughts on the subject of Christian charity. "I wish you to know," she was told on one occasion, "that all virtues and vices in man are propagated by means of his neighbour. . . . It is doing his neighbour an injury when a man does not give him what is his due out of love and when he fails to offer up prayers and holy desires to Me in his behalf. This is a general debt which all creatures endowed with reason owe to each other; but it is doubly sacred with regard to those of a man's own household. . . . You are obliged to support one another by your words and good example, seeking in all things the good of your neighbour as you would of your own soul." And in another place she learned from the same Heavenly Source, "I have told you that all men's sins are committed by means of his neighbour; their origin springs from want of charity, which alone is the source of all virtues, vivifying and developing them. Self-love, which destroys charity and love of his neighbour in man, is the foundation and principle of all evil. Scandals, hatred, cruelty and all other sins which afflict and poison the whole world, trouble the peace of the Church and all Christian people, spring from this root."

The epistle for the Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost is taken from that of St. Paul to the Galatians (ch. iii.)

in which he draws our attention to the salient fact of Christianity that God's promises to Abraham were fulfilled in the person of Christ. Dom Guéranger, commenting on this epistle, says, " Christ Jesus, the true Son of Promise, the only seed of salvation, has, by faith in His Resurrection, assembled from every nation them that are of good will, making them all one in Him, making them like Himself, children of Abraham, and, what is better still, children of God. For the benediction that was promised at the beginning was the Holy Ghost Himself, ' the Spirit of adoption of children,' which, coming down into our hearts, makes us all heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ."

The gospel is that of the ten lepers, from St. Luke (ch. xvii.). The Fathers have seen in the ten lepers a figure of the Jewish people ; the Gentiles being typified by the one Samaritan—that is by the outcast. Christ came to cure all men from the leprosy of sin, but His mission of peace and salvation was despised by the Chosen People. " He came unto His own, and His own received Him not," but when the Gentiles received Him in the person of His ambassadors and delegates, He spoke the word of peace and reconciliation to them, " Arise, go thy way, for thy faith hath made thee whole." There is another application which few will find profitless to apply to themselves. And that is with regard to our reception of the sacrament of penance. We have all sinned, the Blessed Virgin alone excepted. We have all therefore, at interval of weeks or months, to obey God's commands to show ourselves to the priests, His ministers, in order to be cleansed of the leprosy of sin. But having performed this duty, what more have we to do ? Should we not turn to our Lord with great gratitude in our hearts, praising and glorifying Him as the Samaritan did—remembering, too, what the remission of our sins has cost Him, and that " we have been bought at a great price."

The dominant note of the Fourteenth Sunday after

Pentecost is that of confidence in God, just as those of the preceding ones have been of humility, love and gratitude. In the introit we are told :

> " Behold, O God our Protector, and look on the face of Thy Christ, for better is one day in Thy Court than thousands."
>
> Ps. " How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts ! My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. Glory," etc.

In the epistle (Gal. ch. v.) St. Paul bids us " walk in the spirit and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." And he goes on to enumerate what the works of the flesh are, " that they are manifest." Then he sums up all as follows : " Of the which I foretell you, as I have foretold to you, that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity. Against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences." Perhaps we are of the number of those (and they are many) who, because they do not commit the gross sins mentioned by the great Apostle, make little account of the " contentions, emulations, wraths," in other words the faults of temper, and want of charity, which he equally condemns. From this epistle we learn that the Holy Ghost reigns only in the hearts in which the love of God and their neighbour is found, and there only His beautiful fruits of charity, joy, peace, patience and the rest " are manifest."

We find confidence in God again inculcated in the gradual.

> " It is better to trust in the Lord than to trust in man. It is better to hope in the Lord than to hope in princes. Alleluia. Alleluia."

Ps. "Come, let us praise the Lord with joy; let us joyfully sing to God our Saviour."

In the gospel (Matt. ch. vi.) Jesus, speaking to His disciples, lays down that golden rule that "no man can serve two masters": God and mammon. It lies at the very root of the religion taught by the Son of God and enforced by His example. And He goes on to say as the necessary deduction of that rule or law: "Therefore I say to you, be not solicitous for your life, what ye shall eat, nor for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the meat and the body more than the raiment? Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap nor gather into barns, and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? . . . Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they labour not, neither do they spin. But I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. And if the grass of the field which is to-day and to-morrow cast into the oven, God doth so clothe, how much more you, O ye of little faith. Be not solicitous therefore, saying what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the heathens seek. For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things. Seek ye therefore first the Kingdom of God and His justice and all these things shall be added unto you."

Exquisite words, which Christ's chosen disciples must often have recalled in the days when, having received their Master's command to go and "teach all nations," they carried the message of the gospel to the heathen. But though this teaching of our Lord need only be accepted in its literal sense by those who have left all to follow Him, in another sense it is applicable to all who wish to lead a truly Christian life. "For" (as we read in "The Liturgical Year") "the Unitive Way is possible in every state of life, only there must

be one condition observed, and that is, the soul must be detached from every tie that could keep her from going to God. The religious breaks these ties by his three vows, which are in direct opposition to the triple concupiscence; but if the Christian does not bring himself, in the midst of his riches, to be as poor *in spirit* as the religious is *in deed*, his progress will be checked at the first step he takes in the contemplative life."

Offertory. "The Angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear Him: taste and see that the Lord is sweet."

In the epistle for the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Gal. ch. v., vi.), St. Paul points out in unmistakable terms in what way Christians who live in the Spirit, that is, have been made His temple by Baptism, should conduct themselves. How utterly at variance with the leading of the divine Spirit—Who comes to us in love and is Himself the Love of Father and Son—are the workings of the unregenerate man, the old Adam, against which he warns us. "Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. Brethren, if a man be overtaken in any fault, ye who are spiritual, instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so ye shall fulfil the law of Christ."

In the gradual we read the consoling words:

"It is good to give praise to the Lord and to sing to Thy praise, O most High!

"To show forth Thy mercy in the morning and Thy truth in the night. Alleluia. Alleluia."

The gospel is that of St. Luke (ch. vii.) in which the Evangelist relates the history of the raising to life of

the son of the widow of Naim. And of how " when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, Weep not! And he came near and touched the bier, and they that carried it stood still. And He said: Young man, I say to thee, arise. And he that was dead, sat up and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother."

The Fathers and Doctors of the Church have seen a figure of holy Church in the disconsolate widow following her son to the grave. The same gospel is put before us in Lent to invite us to join with her in lamenting over the death of so many of her children by a life of sin, and in appealing to the compassionate heart of our Saviour to raise them up by the life-giving sacraments of Penance and the holy Eucharist.

The Psalms quoted in the introit of the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost have a special application to the words of St. Paul which follow it:

> " Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I have cried up to Thee all the day: for Thou, O Lord, art sweet and mild and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon Thee."
>
> Ps. " Bow down Thy ear to me, O Lord, and hear me, for I am needy and poor."

In the epistle (Eph. ch. iii.) St. Paul shows by his example how tribulations work for grace in this world, and for glory in God in the next.

> " Brethren, I pray you not to faint at my tribulations for you which are your glory. For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened by his Spirit with might unto the inward man. That Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts that being rooted

> and founded in charity, you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth. To know also the charity of Christ which surpasseth all knowledge: that you may be filled unto all the fulness of God."

It is to the lowly of heart, to those " who tremble at His Word," that God reveals Himself in His plenitude as He does to His saints. And this teaching is enforced in the gospel (Luke ch. xiv.), in which our Lord " spoke a parable," marking how they chose the first seats at the table, saying to them:

> " When thou art invited to a wedding, sit not down in the first place, lest perhaps one more honourable than thou be invited by him, and he that invited thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place. And then thou begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when thou art invited, go and sit down in the lowest place that when he who inviteth thee cometh, he may say, Friend, go up higher, then shalt thou have glory before them that sit at table with thee, because everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Humility has been defined by one versed in the interior life as the habit of making little of ourselves. But this habit may arise from timidity, from dislike of publicity, or other causes. To be a virtue, it must be founded on the motive of the ever-present majesty and greatness of God. To bring this thought home to us, let us consider what the effect would be on us if a great man—one distinguished for gifts or achievements, a hero, royalty, or Prince of the Church, came to visit us; how, as long as we were in his presence, we should

sink our differences, our little pretensions, and, for the time, forget and ignore them. Even so should the thought of God's greatness, of His supreme importance, make us realize our utter insignificance and unimportance in comparison with Him. Thus humility (theology tells us) should be looked upon as a universal virtue, because it lies at the root of all others. It deals a death-blow to self-love, which is the greatest obstacle to God's reign in our heart, and paves the way to love of Him and of our neighbour for His sake. It prepares the soul for the coming of the Holy Ghost whose fruits are charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness and the rest. It therefore makes our service of God a source of deep happiness and consolation to us, and of edification to others, and thus is ever tending to God's glory and the salvation of souls. The words of the great Precursor, " He must increase and I decrease," should be deeply imprinted on our hearts and we should seek to model our lives on them.

EMBER DAYS

We are reminded yearly at the recurrence of the Autumn season that the Church seeks by the institution of these days of fasting and prayer, first to ask God's blessing on His ministers, who during this week have been ordained for His service, and secondly to pray and to give thanks for the fruits of the earth.

On Wednesday we read in the lesson (Amos, ch. ix.) the beautiful and consoling promises made by the prophet in God's name to the repentant people.

> " Thus saith the Lord God, Behold the days come when the ploughman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed, and the mountains shall drop sweetness and every hill shall be tilled. And I will bring

back the captivity of My people Israel, and they shall build the abandoned cities and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards and drink the wine of them; and shall make gardens and eat the fruits of them; and I will plant them upon their own land. And I will no more pluck them out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God."

Gradual. "Who is as the Lord our God Who dwelleth on high; and looketh down on the low things in Heaven and in earth? Raising up the needy from the earth, and lifting up the poor out of the dung hill."

In the gospel (Mark, ch. ix.) we learn how the disciples, having failed to cast out the dumb spirit from a man who had been grievously tormented by it, "came to Jesus secretly and asked Him: Why could not we cast him out? And he said to them, This kind can go out by nothing but by prayer and fasting." Do we remember this rule laid down by the divine Master when we ask for the conversion of sinners; for those whom Satan has laid hold of, as he had the unfortunate man in the gospel, by the fatal snares of pride and unbelief? Christ's words should teach us never to despair, but to try with the weapons of earnest, importunate prayer, and the discipline, the hair-shirt, and fasting, to cast out the devil and bring back the spirit of God to the soul of those from whom it has been banished.

On Friday in Ember week, we are again invited to put our utmost confidence in God's mercy.

Introit. "Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord: seek ye the Lord and be strengthened; seek Him for evermore."

Ps. "Give glory to the Lord and call upon His name; declare His deeds among the Gentiles."

Again we read of the loving forgiveness and the promises of God to His people (Osee, ch. xiv.).

> "Thus saith the Lord God, Return, O Israel, to the Lord thy God. . . . I will be as the dew. Israel shall spring up as the lily and his root shall shoot forth as that of Libanus. His branches shall spread and his glory shall be as the olive tree and his smell as that of Libanus. They shall be converted that sit under his shadow; they shall live upon wheat and they shall blossom as a vine. . . . Who is wise and he shall understand these things? prudent and he shall know these things? For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them, but the transgressors shall fall in them."
>
> Gradual. "Return, O Lord, a little, and be entreated by thy servants. Lord, Thou hast been our refuge from generation."
>
> Offertory. "Bless the Lord, O my soul and never forget all He hath done for thee: and thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle's."

The gospel is the same which was put before us in Passion week (Luke, ch. vii.), Christ's compassionate forgiveness of the sinner Magdalen, and the absolving words, "Many sins are forgiven her because she has loved much;" and again, "Thy faith hath made thee safe; go in peace;" are set down as a lesson to us—showing us that we need love, as well as faith, in order to receive pardon for our sins.

The introit for Ember Saturday begins with an act of adoration.

> "Come let us adore God and fall down before the Lord: let us weep before Him Who made us, for He is the Lord our God."
>
> Ps. "Come, let us praise the Lord with joy; let us joyfully sing to God our Saviour."

The lesson which is taken from Leviticus (ch. xxiii.) records how the Lord spoke to Moses telling him that when the people of Israel have gathered in all the fruits of the land, they shall celebrate the feast of the Lord seven days. And that on these days the people shall live in tabernacles " of boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook " to commemorate their deliverance, " that your posterity may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in tabernacles, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt."

Two more lessons are read from the Old Testament, from the prophecies of Micheas and Zacharius, which lead up to the epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews (ch. xi.) in which the Apostle to the Gentiles declares in moving terms how all the types proclaimed by patriarchs and prophets in the Old Law are fulfilled in the New in the person of the Messiah.

" But Christ being come a high-priest of the good things to come, by a greater and more perfect Tabernacle, not made with hands, that is not of this creation, neither by the blood of goats, nor of calves, but by His own blood, entered once into the Holies having obtained eternal redemption." In these, as in so many parts of the holy liturgy, we see the Church striving by prayer and exposition of her inspired doctrine to bring the Jewish people to the knowledge of the truth and to find refuge in her bosom. She can never forget that for centuries they were the special recipients of a divine revelation ; that they numbered amongst them great and elect souls, whose lives were recorded with praise by the inspired writers, " of whom was born Jesus : who is called Christ." God only can work the transformation that is required, and accordingly she never ceases to recommend the conversion of the Jews to the prayers of the faithful.

The gospel for Ember Saturday (Luke, ch. xiii.) is as follows :

" At that time Jesus spoke to the multitude this

parable. A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none, and he said to the dresser of the vineyard, Behold, for these three years past, I come seeking fruit on this fig tree and I find none. Cut it down therefore; why cumbereth it the ground? But he answering said to him, Lord, let it alone this year also until I dig about it and dung it and if happily it bear fruit; but if not then after that Thou shalt cut it down."

So may our Guardian Angel plead for us with our heavenly Father when, visiting our soul, He finds no fruit worthy of eternal life. For, as we are constantly reminded in the Scriptures, absence of evil is not a sufficient plea to gain Heaven; we must do good. And the good we do must be founded on a supernatural motive: that is in order to please God, and for His honour and glory, or it will find no merit in His sight. The Pharisee who boasted that he led a pure life, fasted twice a week, and gave tithes of all he possessed, met with no favour from our Saviour, for his motive was self-glorification and the praise of men. Thus Christ has laid down the formal law, "Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven." If the Holy Ghost dwells in our heart and makes it His temple, we shall find no difficulty in these words. For, as St. Augustine says, "Love God and do what you will." Every act of piety or of charity, every elevation of the soul to God in compunction for sin, or thanksgiving for graces received, will merit an everlasting reward from Him Who looks at the heart, and Whose judgments are based on what He beholds there.

In the epistle for the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost, St. Paul, in writing to the Ephesians (ch. iv.), reminds us in striking words of what Christ expects from His followers: "Brethren, I who am a prisoner in the Lord,

beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called with all humility and mildness, with patience, supporting one another in charity. Careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." We do not think enough of this vocation to which we are all called ; for if we did, how transported our hearts would be with joy at the thought that Christ has called us, a mere handful in comparison to the millions of pagans and of nominal Christians outside the Fold—or even within it—who know Him not, to be His own : " members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." Should we not seek earnestly to walk worthy of this great grace and vocation ? There is only one way of attaining this end, as the great apostle points out, which is to put all our trust in the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us ; to invoke Him constantly ; to realize that He is the true " bond of peace," without which our souls will be ever at the mercy of our passions, like a rudderless vessel tossed about by the winds and waves, seeking a port but never finding one.

In the gospel we are again called upon by our Lord (Matt. ch. xxii.) to practise the first and greatest commandment and the second which is " like to it." To realize the transforming power of the love of God when it takes entire possession of a soul, we should study its effect in His saints. What could be more illuminating, for instance, than what St. John of the Cross says of divine love in his spiritual Canticle.

In the inmost cellar
Of my Beloved have I drunk,
And when I went forth
Over all the plain,
I knew nothing,
And lost the flock I followed before.
My soul is occupied
And all my substance in His service ;
Now I guard no flock,
Nor have I any other employment :
My sole occupation is love.
Since ever I have known Love's mighty power
Thus hath it wrought its work within my soul.

The epistle of the Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost is taken from the first of St. Paul to the Corinthians (ch. i.).

"Brethren, I give thanks to my God always for you for the grace of God that is given you in Jesus Christ that in all things you are made rich in Him." What a light these words should throw on all our spiritual life! Spiritual writers tell us that one of the benefits that the soul derives from union with God by divine grace is that of reciprocity. In His unspeakable mercy, God deigns in return for the offering we make of ourselves to Him, to share with us all the treasures of His Sacred Heart. Never shall we in this life realize the fathomless depth of the riches He places at our disposal, for they extend to all the thoughts, words and deeds of His Sacred Humanity. Every action we perform in union with those of our divine Head becomes as it were transformed, so that the eternal Father sees no longer in them the sin-disfigured actions of a child of Adam, but the reflection of His beloved Son, "in whom He is well pleased." Mother Juliana puts this truth in very simple yet telling language. "The virtue and the goodness that we have is of Jesu Christ; the feebleness and blindness that we have is of Adam . . . and thus hath our good Lord Jesu taken upon Him all our blame; and therefore our Father may, nor will, ~~no~~ more blame assign to us than to His own dear worthy Son Jesu Christ."

The gospel is taken from that of St. Matthew (ch. ix.) in which our Lord, having first absolved the man who was brought to Him sick of the palsy, afterwards "as a proof that the Son of man had power on earth to forgive sins, then said to the man sick of the palsy: Arise, take up thy bed and go into thy house. And he arose and went into his house." In this manner did He, of whom the Scripture prophesied that He was a Priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedeck, exercise His priestly functions. And these He delegated to His apostles and their successors in the words, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are

forgiven them and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained" (John, ch. xx.). And finally, in the words, "All power is given to Me in Heaven and in earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. ch. xxviii.).

The feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary is kept on the 8th of September. Holy Church puts before us in the epistle words taken from the book of Proverbs, which though primarily addressed to the Son of God she also applies to His Blessed Mother. For of her also it may be said: "The Lord possessed me from the beginning. I was set up from eternity and of old before the earth was made." The words with which the epistle ends are specially significant when looked upon in the light of the Church's teaching: "He that shall find me shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord." For Mary is the sure road to Jesus. To love the Mother is a safe passport to favour with the Son. Moreover our teachers in spiritual doctrines explain that as our Lord derived His human flesh from His Mother—His blood from her veins, His nourishment from her milk—so when confiding to her the human race in the person of John He willed that man should receive through her the life of the Spirit as He had received through her the life of the body. How much consolation and solid fruit in the ordering of our lives should we derive from this thought! Should we not turn to her lovingly for our spiritual wants, our growth and progress in piety—even as our divine Saviour did for His bodily sustenance—with perfect confidence, believing that (in the words of St. Bernard) no one ever had recourse to her protection, implored her help, or sought her mediation

without obtaining relief? The same great saint and devout client of Mary remarks elsewhere in one of his writings "that Mary is not one that enquireth what we may have deserved, but is to all most easy to be entreated and most merciful in the breadth of her love. She hath pity upon the necessities of us all."

The Church shows the measure and scope of her confidence in Mary by putting in her mouth the inspired words: "I am the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge and of holy hope"—words which are constantly repeated in her liturgies. Also in hailing her in her Litany, which is sung at the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament (amongst her other titles) as Mother most amiable, Virgin most merciful, Virgin most faithful, Cause of our joy, Comforter of the afflicted and Refuge of sinners.

St. Peter Claver's feast is kept on the 9th of September. He was a Spaniard, and was born in 1581, and entered the Jesuit noviceship twenty years later at Tarragona. From thence he was sent to Majorca, where he met the holy lay-brother Alphonso Rodriguez, who was inspired to tell him that he was destined by God to work for the conversion of the negroes in S. America. Peter at once obeyed the call, and started for Cartagena, which was the central mart of the slave-trade, and for forty-four years he devoted himself to evangelizing and, as far as possible, ameliorating the lives of the unfortunate slaves. Every month a cargo of a thousand negroes landed at the port, and Peter's habit was to go out to meet them in the pilot boat, show them every kindness and attention, and having done all he could for their bodily wants, preach the Gospel of Christ to them. No form of disease was too repulsive for him. He saw only the image of his Lord and Master in the leper and the outcast; and, whilst his days were spent in nursing their wounds, his nights were spent in acts of penance and prayer. Three hundred thousand conversions rewarded the prayers and labours of this great saint, who gave himself the name

of the "slave of slaves." He went to his eternal reward in 1654. During his life he worked many miracles, but his life was the greatest miracle of all, and the most powerful testimony to the Faith he preached.

St. Catherine of Genoa's feast is held on the 14th of this month. She was married at an early age, and, as was customary in the fifteenth century, in obedience to her parents' wishes, and in spite of being strongly attracted to a religious life. It was an unhappy marriage, and for a time Catherine sought distraction in a worldly life; but at the age of twenty-six, by an extraordinary and wholly supernatural operation of divine grace, she was in one moment converted, and from that time she led a life which might without exaggeration be called angelic. She was constantly favoured by divine revelations, especially on the subject of the suffering souls in Purgatory. The following words occur in the treatise she wrote on purgatory: "They see all things not in themselves but as they are in God, on whom they are more intent than on their own sufferings. . . . I will say furthermore, I see that as far as God is concerned, Paradise has no gates, but he who will may enter. For God is all mercy, and His arms are ever extended to receive us into His glory. But I see that the Divine Essence is so pure—purer than the imagination can conceive—that the soul, finding in itself the slightest imperfection, would rather cast itself into a thousand hells than appear stained in the presence of the divine Majesty." Both this treatise, and her "Dialogue of the soul and body," have been pronounced by the holy Office as enough in themselves to prove her sanctity. We learn from her biography, which was written by her confessor Fr. Marabotto, that she converted her husband by her prayers, and that in spite of her gifts of contemplation, her life was wholly devoted to active works, principally in nursing the sick in the great hospital of Genoa. She gave up her holy soul to God A.D. 1510.

The 15th of September is dedicated to the Seven

Dolours of the Blessed Mother of God. The Mass on this Feast is the same as that celebrated on Friday in Passion Week.

The feast of St. Matthew, apostle and evangelist, is celebrated on the 21st of this month. In his own gospel, we read of him that he was "sitting in the custom-house" when he received Christ's call to follow Him: "and he rose up and followed Him. And it came to pass as he was sitting at meat in the house, behold many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and His disciples." It was therefore owing to this sublime condescension on the part of our Saviour, that the Pharisees made it a matter of reproach to the disciples that their master ate with publicans and sinners. "But Jesus hearing it, said, They that are in health, need not the physician but they that are ill. Go then and learn what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice. For I am not come to call the just but sinners" (ch. ix.). This apostle is mentioned as Levi in the gospels of St. Mark and St. Luke. It is therefore highly probable that Christ renamed him Mattya, "gift of Javeh" (or God) after his call to the apostolate. Tradition—which dates from the second century—relates that he evangelized Persia and Ethiopia, and according to the Roman Martyrology was put to death in Ethiopia. His gospel was written six years after our Lord's Ascension, in Syro-Chaldaic.

The Church celebrates the feast of the great Archangel Michael on the 29th of September. His name, which in Hebrew signifies Who is like God (Mi-ca-el), was the cry of the angelic hosts who remained faithful to God. The name of the Angel Michael recurs four times in the Old and New Testament, and he is mentioned ever as a protector of the children of God. Holy Church invokes him as a special guardian and protector, placing his name after that of the Blessed Virgin in the Confiteor, and imploring his assistance at the hour of death for all the faithful who die in communion with her.

St. Paul, in his epistle to the Ephesians (ch. iv.) which we read on the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost, adjures them in the following words to make an entire change of their lives as befits those who have received the gospel of Christ, "Brethren, be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new man who, according to God, is created in justice and holiness of truth." Humility is the virtue especially inculcated by the Apostle in the last words, for spiritual writers tell us that justice and humility are synonymous. The humble man renders to God all the glory due to the good he performs, acknowledging that God alone is the author of all good. This is the "holiness of truth" which only the children of God, the divinely enlightened, understand, and it leads to the acquisition of all virtues, especially that of charity. For, as St. Paul goes on to say, "we are members of one another."

In the gospel of St. Matthew (ch. xxii.), we read how Jesus compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a "king who made a marriage for his son." This parable, which is repeated twice in the holy gospel with a slight variation (Luke ch. xiv.), is one of the very deepest significance. For the marriage of the king's son, in other words of the Son of God, is a figure of the alliance which God has made with the human race in His Incarnation. In stooping to man's level, as the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity did in taking flesh from the Virgin Mary's womb, the Creator identified Himself with His creatures. By His Redemption He raised them to be partakers of the divine nature so that in a mystical but very real sense, the words of the prophet were fulfilled, "I have said you are gods, and all of you sons of the most High" (Ps. lxxxi. 6). We all know what was the reply of the Jewish nation to this invitation. They rejected the Messiah and put Him to death; and God turned to the Gentiles, and "His servants, going forth into the ways, gathered together all that they found,

both bad and good, and the marriage was filled with guests." The servants of God, namely the ministers of His Church and His saints, are ever summoning the children of men to the marriage-feast. Let us not be of the number of those who obey the summons—that is have the true faith—but have not the wedding garment of charity, so that we run not the risk of being cast into exterior darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. "For many are called but few are chosen."

In the epistle for the Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost, which is taken from that of St. Paul to the Ephesians (ch. v.), he bids us study attentively what is the Will of God in our regard. The Will of God is manifested to us individually in many ways. St. Paul here speaks of the divine Will in its universal application. For to all men those words are addressed that they should "walk circumspectly not as unwise but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil." To walk circumspectly is to watch over our footsteps so that we do not fall into bogs, or get entangled in briars. It is, above all, that we should keep our eye steadily on that heavenly bourne towards which all our hopes and desires should tend. Moreover, we must "redeem the time." Every moment of our lives we should hold as precious, for "there is not a moment which may not be made to bear a burden which is eternal." Every morning that we wake up to face a new day, whether in joy, or in suffering and sorrow, we have but to offer it to God in union with the actions of His divine Son whilst He was upon earth for His honour and glory, to earn an eternal reward. And every time we renew this offering during the day, thus fulfilling the Apostle's injunctions, "all that you do in word or work, do ye in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him," we are cementing that union with Him, which, whilst we are in this world, will be an end-

less cause of peace and happiness to us, as in the next it will be that of our eternal beatitude.

In the gradual we may note a special reference to the gospel, and it sounds that note of joy and confidence in God which, as the saints tell us, has such power of bringing down His choicest graces on us.

> " The eyes of all hope in Thee, O Lord ; and Thou givest them meat in due season. Thou openest Thy Hand and fillest every living creature with benediction. Alleluia. Alleluia. My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready. I will sing and will give praise to Thee, my Glory. Alleluia."

In the gospel, which is taken from that of St. John (ch. iv.), we read how the son of a certain ruler was sick, and " he having heard that Jesus was come from Judea into Galilee, went to Him and prayed Him to come and heal his son for he was at the point of death." On this occasion, our Lord, instead of looking upon the ruler's petition as an act of faith, reproaches him with the want of it. For He answered : " Unless you see signs and wonders, you believe not." But no sooner does the agonized father make that humble appeal to Christ's compassion : " Lord, come down before that my son die," than He turns to him and grants his request. Confidence is what our merciful Saviour asks of all of us ; and yet how often we refuse it to Him and give it to creatures !

The epistle for the Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost is taken from St. Paul's to the Ephesians (ch. vi.). How much we have to learn from its opening words : " Brethren, be strengthened in the Lord, and in the might of His power. Put you on the armour of God." This is the thought that has animated the saints to accomplish such marvellous feats in His service. St. Teresa, when she was engaged in making a foundation at

Toledo, had but two ducats, but her courage did not fail her. "Teresa and two ducats," she said, "can do nothing, but God, and Teresa and two ducats can do all things." To put our trust in God, to rely on His grace in our difficulties—whether in conquering the enemy of our salvation by breaking with the world, or our bad habits, or in undertaking work for His glory, is a sure passport to His favour and a certain means of success.

The gospel is taken from that of St. Matthew (ch. xviii.), in which Christ compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a king who would take an account of his servants. The lesson contained in this parable is so simple and yet how few take it to heart! And like so many of our Lord's teachings, it is equally applicable to those who have made advances in the science of the saints, and are aiming at a close union with their divine Saviour, as to those, who, at the lowest rung of the ladder of perfection, are satisfied with keeping out of grievous sin. For our Lord in His summing up goes to the very gist and kernel of men's offending in the words: "So also shall My Heavenly Father do to you if you forgive not everyone his brother from your hearts." It is to man's heart that God looks. And if He sees there ill-will, resentment, wounded feelings nursed inwardly to the detriment of charity, He will withdraw—and then how great will be that soul's loss! St. Bernard has said some beautiful words about the way the soul recognizes God's coming. "You ask how do I know His presence. Because He is living and full of energy, and as soon as He has entered into me, He has quickened my sleeping soul, has aroused and softened and goaded my heart, which was in a state of torpor and as hard as a stone. He has begun to pluck up and to destroy, to plant and to build; to water the dry places, to illuminate the gloomy spots, to inflame with warmth those which were cold—as also to straighten its crooked paths and make its rough places smooth, so that my soul might bless

the Lord and all that is within me bless His holy Name. Thus, then, the Word, though He has several times entered into me, has never made His coming apparent to my sight, hearing, or touch. I could not tell by any senses that He had penetrated to the depths of my being. It was only by the revived activity of my heart that I was enabled to recognize His coming, and to know the power of His sacred presence by the sudden departure of vices and the strong restraint put upon all carnal affections. His goodness and kindness have become known in the amendment of my life, while in the reformation and renewal of the spirit of my mind (that is of my inward man) I have been rapt in wonder and amazement at His greatness and majesty as I meditated on these things."*

The Church celebrates the feast of the Guardian Angels on the 2nd of October. Many are the references to the angels in the Old and New Testament, and none more striking with regard to their office as protectors and guardians of men than what we read of them in Exodus (ch. xxiii.). God speaking to Moses, said, "Behold, I will send my angel who shall go before thee and keep thee in thy journey and bring thee into the place that I have prepared. Take notice of him and hear his voice and do not think him one to be contemned; for he will not forgive when thou hast sinned and my name is in him." Abbot Vonier uses some remarkable words on this subject. He says, "It may be safely asserted that man is simply incapable of attaining his spiritual end without the co-operation of his guardian angel; that co-operation is as absolute a necessity as are the physical laws that maintain his bodily life. The doctrine of guardian angels is not primarily a devotional doctrine, something given purposely to foster piety and spiritual life, not more than the doctrine of God's constant

* "Sermon on the C. of C.

presence within our being, though of course it may be a fruitful source of devotional feeling."* Meditation on the inspired book of Tobias will help us to acquire this consoling habit, one of the fruits of which is supernatural joy. "He gave joy," was the summing up of the impressions left by the Angel Raphael on the soul of Tobias. We do not think enough of joy; it should be a feature in our spiritual life. If we have it not, we should cultivate it. And intercourse with the angels not only leads to it but points out the way. The way is that of unworldliness, and of having our conversation in Heaven, by which we place our happiness above the reach of passing trials and disappointments. It also leads to abundant almsgiving, which is another form of unworldliness. For it delivers us, as the Angel told Tobias, "from the fear of death, and purgeth away sins and maketh to find mercy and life everlasting."

The Church keeps the feast of St. Francis of Assisi on the 4th of October. The leading features in the seraphic saint's life are known to everyone. They were his conversion after a gay and adventurous youth, followed by a rapid progress in sanctity, built upon profound humility and an ardent love of God; an irresistible attraction exercised by him on his generation, causing numbers to gather round him to learn "the secret of Jesus;" a close imitation of his divine Master and mystical union with Him which culminated in his receiving the stigmata and other marks of divine favour; finally his saintly death, worn out by his austerities. But if we turn to his interior life, as we know it from his disciples, and to the influence he exerted in his own century and succeeding ones, the history of it would run to volumes. The great truth which he preached by his example, even more than by his words, was one that the world is ever losing sight of: and that is that Christ asks more of His children than faith in His dogmas. He asks that they should conform their lives

* "The Human Soul," p. 330.

to His, and return love for love—sacrifice for sacrifice. The love that burned in the heart of the "Poor man of Assisi" made him feel he had never done enough for One Who was the sole object of his love. "Let us begin to serve the Lord our God," was his constant exhortation to his followers, "for hitherto we have made very little progress." The earliest rule of life given by Francis to the Friars Minor was of a very simple nature. He embodied in it our Lord's word, "Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor and come and follow Me," and the evangelical counsel, "Do not possess gold nor silver nor money in your purses; nor scrip for your journey nor two coats nor shoes." When he appeared before Innocent III. to ask for his approval of his Rule, and whilst the question was still in debate, the Pope saw in a dream Francis supporting the Church, which appeared to be tottering on its foundation. Soon afterwards (1210) he gave Francis a verbal sanction of his Rule, and allowed him and his disciples to preach whithersoever they would. Love and ever more love was the text of all the saint's exhortations: love, and repentance of sin. And as the sole language of prose was insufficient to express his soul's longings, he broke out into exquisite verse, such as his Canticle to the sun, in which he praises all the creatures of God as instruments of His and doing His Will. Besides his First Order for men, he instituted a Second Order for women, that of the Poor Clares, and a Third Order for seculars. It would be impossible to conclude the barest sketch of the seraphic saint without mentioning his passion for holy poverty. She was his *Dama Povertà* to whom he had affianced himself; a heaven-sent bride beloved of his Master of which the world was unworthy. "O Francis, lover of the poverty of Jesus," cried a great saint of his Order, "when wilt thou teach us as thou hast taught so many to despise the world?" He died in his forty-fifth year, A.D. 1226.

The Church celebrates St. Teresa's feast on the 15th

of October. This seraphic saint said of herself, "My life should have for its title 'The Mercy of God,'" and in reading her own history of it, we cannot but be struck by the truth of the saying. In this book in which Teresa, in obedience to her confessor, bares her soul to him, we see how her gifts of mind and heart and the fascination she exerted on all around her held her back till, grace finally conquering her, she gave herself up wholly to the divine attraction, and Teresa de Ahumada was lost in Teresa of Jesus. The saint's childhood was a happy and sheltered one. She had an excellent father and a pious mother, the latter dying whilst Teresa was still young. At the age of twenty she felt the call to a religious life, and in spite of her father's opposition, she entered the Carmelite Convent of the Incarnation at Avila, her birth-place. A year later (1526) she was professed; and almost directly afterwards she fell into bad health, and from that time till her death she was scarcely ever free from bodily sufferings. Though Teresa's life at the Incarnation was that of an exemplary religious, she was aware that God was calling her to a higher perfection and to the resumption of mental prayer, a practice which for a short period—described by her in her Life as that of her great vanity—she had given up. Though for fourteen or fifteen years afterwards she was tried by great aridity of soul, she was all the time making giant strides in the path of perfection. God now began to reveal Himself to her by intellectual visions, locutions and raptures. These marks of divine favour were at first so misinterpreted by Teresa's directors that they were a cause of anguish to her rather than of joy, till her fears were set at rest by a learned Jesuit, Fr. de Padranos, and later on by St. Francis Borgia and St. Peter of Alcantara. It was in the year 1560, when Teresa had reached her forty-fifth year, that she was inspired to begin her Reform. In seeking to bring back the Carmelite Order to the primitive Rule, the

saint met with violent opposition from her own Community, and later on from the other superiors and convents of the mitigated Observance. In spite of this, armed with a papal rescript, she founded the Convent of St. Joseph's, Avila (1562), which was quickly followed by others. The Reform of the friars, begun in 1582 by St. John of the Cross under St. Teresa's guidance, met with even greater resistance than that of the nuns. But after many vicissitudes an appeal to Rome ended in a decree authorizing the erection of two provinces: one of mitigated, the other of the discalced, which meant a victory to the Teresian Reform (1580). Trials of every kind increased with Teresa's increasing years. But they only served to unite the soul of her, whose motto was "to suffer or die," to her divine Spouse. The moment so ardently longed for by Teresa came on the 4th of October, 1582, when her soul took flight for Heaven. It is difficult to do justice to the beauty and fascination of Teresa's ascetical works. It can be said of them that they have fed the piety and have added to the knowledge of all students of mystical theology. Time cannot take from their beauty nor diminish their charm; for they take their source from the Fountain-head of truth and beauty.

The feast of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque is kept on the 17th of October. She was born in 1647, and after a youth of great piety, she consecrated herself to God in the Convent of the Visitation, Paray-le-Monial, and was professed in the year 1672. Long before she entered a religious Order, our Lord had manifested Himself in a very special manner by visions and locutions to this elect soul—paving the way as it were to the great heights of sanctity and the mission to which He destined her. The mission was that she should spread the devotion to His Sacred Heart; and in order to do this, that she should share the agony which that divine Heart suffers at the coldness and ingratitude of mankind, and become its victim. Margaret Mary in

her profound humility shrank before a task of which it seemed to her she was wholly unworthy ; but when her divine Spouse explained to her that He had chosen her " as an abyss of ignorance and unworthiness " to accomplish this great design, so that all should recognize in Him its sole author, she at once consented. From that moment till the end, Margaret Mary's life was one of acute trial and suffering. She was treated by the greater number of the Community as a visionary, and the efforts she made at our Lord's express orders to spread devotion to His Sacred Heart and to institute the Holy Hour in commemoration of His agony in the Garden were thwarted and set at nought. It was not till our Lord sent His servant a powerful auxiliary in Fr. de la Colombière, who instantly recognized the finger of God in these happenings, that the tide turned in her favour. In an apparition of our Lord to Margaret Mary in June, 1675, He told her that he wished the first Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi to be set apart as a Feast in honour of His Sacred Heart, in order to make reparation to It for the sins and ingratitude of men. The saint's superiors, won over by her heroic patience, obedience and piety, backed by her director's support, ended by giving implicit faith to her revelations and other manifestations of the divine Will ; and before her saintly death in 1690, she had the joy of seeing a chapel erected to the Sacred Heart within the enclosure, and the special devotions enjoined by our Lord—which have now become world-wide—spreading beyond it.

The feast of the Evangelist St. Luke is celebrated on the 18th of October. One of St. Luke's claims to the love and veneration of all the faithful is that he may be looked upon in an especial manner as our Lady's historian, for to his gospel we owe all the knowledge we have of her life before and directly after the birth of Christ. St. Luke was not a Jew ; and although nothing certain is known about his birthplace, the general opinion (based upon a statement of Eusebius) is that

he was a native of Antioch. St. Paul (Col. iv. 14) calls him the most dear physician, and traditionally he is said to have been a painter. Unquestionably there is hardly a great artist who has not drawn his inspiration in depicting the early scenes of the life of the Holy Family from St. Luke's gospel; accordingly if not a painter in deed, he was certainly a painter in words. His emblem was an ox, which is one of the animals used in sacrifice—from his gospel having begun with the history of Zachary, who was one of the priests who served in the Temple. Whether he met with a martyr's death or not is a moot point, but according to a document dating back to the end of the second century, he died at the age of seventy-four "filled with the Holy Ghost."

The feast of SS. Simon and Jude is celebrated on the 28th of this month. The name of St. Simon is given in all passages of the sacred writings in which all the apostles are mentioned. In the Gospel of St. Mark (ch. iii. 18) and in that of St. Matthew (ch. x. 4) another name is added, signifying the zealous, to distinguish him from Peter. He is said to have earned the grace of martyrdom and to have spread the faith in many remote countries. Little is known about St. Jude, except that his epistle is accepted by the Church as one of the Canonical Books and that in this epistle he styles himself Jude, servant of Jesus Christ (namely apostolic labourer) and brother of James; and from the general evidence there seems little doubt that the author of the epistle was one of the apostles.

The epistle for the Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost is taken from that of St. Paul to the Philippians (ch. 1). In moving terms he exhorts his disciples, whilst associating himself with them, to confidence in God, "Brethren, we are confident in the Lord Jesus that he who hath begun a good work in you will perfect

it unto the day of Christ Jesus." Courage founded on the immutable rock of Christ's promises plays a great part in the supernatural life. St. Teresa speaks of it as if nothing could be done without it, and unquestionably despondency is the cause of the breakdown of many conversions which at first gave promise of abundant fruit. We read in the "Following of Christ" that a servant of God being tempted to despair owing to his doubts whether he would be given the grace of perseverance, heard a voice within him saying: "And if thou didst know this, what wouldst thou do? Do now what thou wouldst then do and thou shalt be secure." He acted on these words and at once he found himself in peace.

In the gradual the recommendation to confidence and a charity "more and more abounding in knowledge and all understanding," is emphasized.

> "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment on the head that ran down on the beard, the beard of Aaron. Alleluia, Alleluia. They that fear the Lord, let them hope in Him: he is their helper and protector. Alleluia."

In the gospel, which is taken from that of St. Matthew (ch. xxii.), we read that the Pharisees consulted among themselves how to ensnare Jesus in his speech, putting before Him the problem whether it was lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not, and the answer our Saviour made to them. His answer: "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's and to God the things that are God's," is one which we may apply to ourselves in many of life's entanglements. We learn from them that we may with a clear conscience devote our time and our service to our country; to the family and worldly concerns which have a claim upon us, and all such interests as long as they do not interfere with the

supreme service which we owe to God. As the coin of the tribute was stamped with the image of Cæsar so are our souls stamped with the likeness of God; for we read in the inspired word, "and God created man to his own image, to the image of God he created him." We belong to God therefore utterly; but in His mercy, He condescends to be satisfied with us as long as we give Him the first place in our lives. If we do so, all created things fall back into their appointed place, and are a help to us rather than a hindrance in attaining the end for which we were created. "My eyes are ever on the Lord," should be our constant aspiration, "He will take my feet out of the snares."

We read in the introit of the Mass of the Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost those consoling words which God addressed to the people of Israel through the mouth of His prophet:

> "The Lord saith, I think thoughts of peace and not of affliction, you shall call upon Me and I will hear you; and I will bring back your captivity from every place.
>
> "Lord, Thou hast blessed Thy land: Thou hast turned away the captivity of Jacob."

The epistle for the same Sunday is taken from that of St. Paul to the Philippians (ch. iii.), in which he implores his brethren "to walk so as you have our model," following up those words with a warning of deep significance: "For many walk of whom I have told you often (and now tell you weeping) that they are enemies of the Cross of Christ." In these words we are led to realize the cardinal distinction which exists between the natural man and those who have been raised by grace to the supernatural life. For—children of Adam as we all are—is it not our instinct to love pleasure, the comforts of life and its luxuries; in short, is not enmity

to the Cross of Christ ingrained in us? The answer to such heart-searchings is that grace will make that possible which to nature is impossible. We see this in the example of the saints. They were born with the same inclinations, passions, and temptations as the rest of mankind; but by the grace of God they triumphed over them, and from lovers of self, became followers of Christ crucified. The cause in all cases was the same. It was love. The love of God alone can draw us out of our inborn love of self. It alone can transform us, making us followers of Jesus; and if not lovers of His cross, patiently submissive under the crosses He lays upon us.

The gospel is from the ninth chapter of St. Matthew, in which he describes two of our Lord's miracles: one the raising to life of the daughter of a man who is described as a "certain ruler," and the other that of the woman who had been "troubled with an issue of blood twelve years." In both cures we see the reward of faith, that most precious gift and grace, which is second only to charity and to which we see our Lord attaching such immense importance during the whole of His public ministry. If we had the faith of the woman who "said within herself, if I shall touch only his garment, I shall be cured," what a change it would work in our lives? Every time we receive Him in holy Communion, we could not approach more nearly to Him; he is there, really and truly present under the appearance of bread and wine Whom the angels adore, Whom Mary bore for nine months in her virginal womb. Nothing is wanting on His side. He speaks to the soul of man as He did to the leper, "What wilt thou that I do to thee?" What is absent on our side is the passionate eagerness of the wretched man suffering from a loathsome disease who saw a heaven-sent chance of being delivered from it? With us the eagerness is wanting, because we are hardly aware of the stains of habitual sins upon our souls, or of past ones for which

we have insufficiently grieved or done penance; our faith, too, is not that of the woman who believed that she had only to touch His garment to be healed. How can we expect then to hear those life-giving words, "Go in peace, thy faith hath made thee whole?"

The feast of All Saints is kept on the first of November. It is a holiday of obligation, with a vigil and octave. From the earliest days of Christianity the faithful had the custom of solemnizing the anniversary of martyrs' deaths at the places where they occurred. By degrees the custom spread, and various dioceses joined in a common feast in their honour. Other saints were added to the number later, so that we find a "Commemoratio Confessorum" in the Chaldean Calendar in 411. Chapels (*i.e.*, in the Basilica of St. Peter) were dedicated to all the saints in 731-41. Gregory IV. (827-44) extended the celebration of the feast to the entire Church, and ordered it to be kept on the 1st of November. The joy and exultation felt by our holy Mother the Church for those of her members who are crowned with glory is everywhere reflected in the Divine Office.

First antiphon. "O fear the Lord, all ye His saints, for there is no want to them that fear Him. Behold the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and His ears are open unto their cry."

Second antiphon. "O Lord, Thou hast been a shelter for Thy saints, a strong tower from the enemy. Thou hast given the heritage to those that fear Thy name and they shall abide in Thy tabernacle for ever."

Third antiphon. "Ye that love the Lord rejoice in the Lord and give thanks in the remembrance of His holiness."

Lesson (taken from Ven. Bede): "Dearly

beloved Brethren, this day we keep with one great cry of joy a feast in memory of all God's holy children. His children whose presence is a gladness to Heaven; His children, whose victories are the crown of the holy Church; His chosen whose testifying is the more glorious in honour as the agony in which it was given was the sterner; and the heavier the torment the heavier the prize. It is our Mother the Catholic Church spread far and wide throughout all this planet—it is she that hath learned in Christ Jesus her Head not to fear shame, nor the cross, nor death, but hath waxed lealer and lealer, and, not by fighting but by enduring, hath breathed into all the noble band who have come up to the bitter starting-post, the hope of conquest and glory which hath warmed them to accept manfully the race."

Responsory. "At midnight there was a cry made: Behold the Bridegroom cometh! Go ye out to meet Him.

"Trim your lamps, O ye wise virgins.

"Behold the Bridegroom cometh! Go ye out to meet Him."

The epistle is from the Apocalypse (ch. vii.). There we are invited to join with the "great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and in sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands: and they cried with a loud voice saying, Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb."

The gospel is that of the Beatitudes (Matt. ch. v.).

The feast of All Souls is kept on the 2nd. The custom of recording the names of departed brethren in the "*diptychs* (or tablets) of the dead" dates from the early days of Christianity. The sons of St. Benedict dedicated a day during Whitsuntide in the sixth century

to a special commemoration of their departed brethren ; and in the time of St. Isidore the Saturday before Sexagesima, or that before Pentecost, was observed in Spain as days on which services were held for the faithful departed. In Milan the same custom was observed in the time of Bishop Otricus (1120-5), and it has since spread to the universal Church. It is obligatory for all priests to say requiem Masses on this day and to recite the Office for the dead. In Spain, Portugal, and Latin America the custom has long prevailed of saying three Masses for the dead on this day, and this privilege has been extended to the universal Church by the late Pope Benedict XV.

The beautiful and consoling words of St. Paul (I. Cor. ch. xv.) are given in the epistle of All Souls, ending with the following, " And when this mortal hath put on immortality then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory ? O death, where is thy sting ? Now the sting of death is sin ; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who has given us the victory through the Lord Jesus Christ."

The *Dies iræ* is recited at every Mass on this day. In this sequence or hymn we are led first to consider the awful majesty of God before Whom we must all appear sooner or later to give an account of our lives. But lest we should be driven to despair, the mercy and loving kindness of our Redeemer is brought in moving terms to our remembrance :

Recordare, Jesu pie,
Quod sum causa tuæ viæ :
Ne me perdas illa die.

Quærens me, sedisti lassus ;
Redemisti crucem passus :
Tantus labor non sit cassus.

The gospel is from that of St. John (ch. v.), in which our Lord proclaims in unmistakable words the doctrine of the resurrection of the body at the last day. " The

hour cometh wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life, but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment."

The feast of St. Winefrid, though erased from the Roman Kalendar, is held in honour in Wales, and kept on the 3rd of this month. Her mother, who was of noble family, was a sister of St. Beuno and under the guidance of that holy cenobite, Winefrid consecrated herself to God in the religious state. She refused the hand of Caradoc, a Cambrian prince, and he, finding her alone on one occasion in her father's house, pressed his suit so violently that she fled from him to take refuge in a neighbouring oratory where her uncle was saying Mass. Caradoc, furious at his repulse, pursued her, and drawing his sword, cut off her head. Her head was reunited to her body and she was restored to life by the prayers of St. Beuno. Winefrid assembled later on a community of nuns, of whom she became abbess. Her holy life was signalized by many miracles; it terminated in A.D. 660, but miracles have never ceased at the spot where her head fell when it was severed from her body. Still pilgrims find their way in great numbers yearly to St. Winefrid's Well to bathe in the water which sprang up at the scene of her martyrdom, and numerous miracles reward their faith in the holy virgin's intercession.

The feast of St. Gertrude (anciently called the Great) is kept on the 15th. She was born in the middle of the thirteenth century. She entered the Benedictine alumnate at five years of age at Helfta near Eisleben, where she was elected Abbess in succession to the saintly Gertrude of Hackeborn. Her youth was spent in severe studies—probably of a secular nature, a proof of which is given in her proficiency in the Latin language, in

which all her works are written and which was both pure and elegant. For this devotion she reproached herself in her mature years—as the saints reproach themselves for acts innocent in themselves and yet in which in God's light they see a want of correspondence to divine grace and to a call to the highest perfection. The most marked characteristics of Gertrude's sanctity were her union with the divine Will and her confidence in God. Our Lord speaking to St. Mechtilde (Gertrude's sister in religion) compared her perfect conformity to His good pleasure to the instinctive obedience of a man's limbs to his will; so that no sooner does he will to move or look than his eyes and limbs carry out his wishes. "Thus," he said, "Gertrude is to Me as a hand, an eye, a tongue, which I can use as I wish without meeting any resistance to My desires." Gertrude's confidence in God was so great that it seemed as if the Heart of her divine Spouse could refuse her nothing, and her intercessions covered the whole field of suffering humanity; sinners on earth, the holy souls, were in turn the objects of them. Another distinguishing mark of Gertrude's spirituality was her joy. She served the Lord with gladness because of her absolute detachment from all earthly ties. In this she proves the truth of the angelic Doctor's saying that joy is inseparable from sacrifice, because a soul that has given up all for God is united to the Source of all joy. She wrought many miracles during her lifetime and after her death; and her visions and revelations were well-nigh continual, so that it might be said of her that she lived, even during her life, more in Heaven than on earth. Her ascetical works, which she wrote at the express order of her divine Master, are still in constant use by the faithful. She gave up her holy soul to God in the year 1385.

The feast of St. Elizabeth of Hungary is kept on the 19th of November. None of the medieval saints have appealed more to the heart and imagination of all

Christian people than this saint has done. Her life was a living poem, and both poets and painters have continually taken it for their theme. She was born in 1207 and was the daughter of Andrew II., King of Hungary, who betrothed her at five years of age to a son of the Landgrave of Thuringia. Her young life was spent at the Thuringian Court, where she showed herself a model of piety, sweetness and modesty. She was married at the age of fourteen (1221) to Ludwig, who succeeded his father the same year and who, himself excellently good, appreciated, as she deserved, the treasure Providence had assigned to him. Elizabeth bore her husband three children. In the last year of her happy married life, Thuringia suffered from disastrous floods, which were followed by famine and the plague. In Ludwig's absence (he was at Cremona attending the Diet), Elizabeth assumed the management of affairs, and devoted herself and all the resources of the country to the succour of the homeless and the afflicted. She built a hospital at Wartburg and used to nurse and attend to the wants of the plague-stricken there and in their homes. She fed nine hundred starving people daily during this time of destitution, and numerous stories have been handed down about her self-sacrifices and loving devotion to "God's poor." In the following year, Ludwig took the cross, and started off with a large following for the Holy Land; he got no further than Otranto, where he died of plague. Elizabeth's anguish was great when she heard of her husband's death. It is said that she went about the Castle saying, "Now have I lost everything that gave joy to my life." Elizabeth's eldest son being only five years old, his uncle was appointed regent, and he made use of his authority to turn Elizabeth and her children out of the Castle of Wartburg. Taking refuge in the town, she found every door closed to her; finally she sought and found refuge in a deserted pig-sty. And here God, who had taken all earthly happiness from her,

flooded her soul with celestial joys, so that going to a neighbouring church she asked the friars to chant a Te Deum in thanksgiving for the grace God had given her of sharing His poverty. Her life was henceforth divided between prayer, nursing the sick, and visiting the poor; all she possessed she gave in charity, desiring only "naked to follow her naked Jesus." Under the guidance of her director Conrad, she became a tertiary of St. Francis. God favoured her with every kind of supernatural grace, such as ecstasies, raptures and the gift of miracles. An ancient chronicler relates that for three days before her death she lay entranced in God, and from her throat there came sounds as of the song of a nightingale. She died in 1231.

The feast of the virgin-martyr St. Cecilia is celebrated on the 22nd of this month. The earliest mention of her occurs in the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, which dates from the fourth century, where we read that her feast was kept in Rome. The Acts of the martyrs, which were translated into Greek and on which the lessons of her feast are founded, date from the fifth century. From the latter we learn that she was a Christian by birth and belonged to an illustrious Roman family. She was affianced when she grew up to a young noble of the name of Valerianus, a pagan. God had already taken possession of her heart and she had consecrated herself to Him; accordingly, after the marriage ceremony was performed, she told her husband that she belonged to another: "for," she said, "I have a spouse you know not of," and that an angel of the Lord would defend her virginity. Valerianus, moved by the grace of God, asked to see the angel, and Cecilia sent him to the Appian Way, where he was met by Pope Urbanus, who received him into the Church. It is said that when he returned a Christian, her angel crowned the holy couple with roses and lilies. Valerianus and his brother, who also got the grace of faith, were martyred shortly afterwards. A little later Cecilia was condemned to be

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suffocated in the bath in her own palace, and when she came out of it unhurt, the prefect ordered her to be decapitated. Three blows were struck, but it pleased God to delay yet a little while her glorious crowning; she lived three days longer with her head partially severed, during which time she recommended the poor she had been accustomed to feed, to the Pope's Vicar, and made over her house to him to be used as a church for ever. Finally she gave up her soul to God and rested in peace A.D. 177.

The feast of St. Andrew, the apostle and patron saint of Scotland, is celebrated by the Church on the 30th of November as a day of devotion, in Scotland as a day of obligation. He was a brother of St. Peter and a follower of the Baptist. Andrew was the first to recognize Christ as the Messiah; for, as we read in the gospel of St. John (ch. v.), "he findeth first his brother Simon and saith to him, 'We have found the Messiah,' which is being interpreted Christ; and he brought him to Christ." In all the gospels in which a list of the apostles is given, his name comes third. Ven. Bede gave him the name of the "Introducer to Christ" because when some Greeks in Jerusalem (John xii.) wished to see Jesus and applied to Philip, he referred them to Andrew as one of greater authority. After our Lord's Ascension, he preached the Gospel in many countries: in Cappadocia, Galatia and Bythynia and finally in Achaia, where in the town of Patræ, he met with his glorious martyrdom. Like his divine Master, he was crucified, his cross being of the form now known as St. Andrew's Cross. In the Office of his feast, it is said that he embraced it, saying, "Hail blessed Cross! receive me into thy arms so that God may receive me into His for all eternity."

THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT, SUFFERING AND MILITANT

THOUGHTS FOR NOVEMBER

To all the faithful who give devout attention to the spirit as well as to the letter of the ordinances of our holy Mother the Church, this month will convey a very special message and significance. The first day is dedicated to the worship and veneration of all God's saints. The second to the departed souls, who await in purgatory in pain and deprivation of the sight of God, the moment of their happy release and admittance into Heaven. During the whole month it is usual for those who (as we have said) enter into the spirit of the Church, to make intercession for the holy souls by means of the indulgenced prayers which she places at their disposal. There is yet another object which the Church —ever careful of the souls of her children—would indicate as being no less pressing and no less important for all: that is the thought of death and their own eternal salvation. "With desolation is the whole world made desolate because no man thinketh in his heart," are the words of holy Writ on this solemn subject; and again we are told: "Remember thy last end and thou shalt not sin."

The month of November is the concluding month of the Ecclesiastical year. It is most fitting, therefore, that in this month we should take stock—as it were—of the past, and prepare for the future. And with this view holy Church on the twenty-fourth or last Sunday after Pentecost never fails, however many Sundays she has borrowed from the Sundays after the Epiphany to complete the tale of Sundays before the beginning of Advent, to put before the faithful the solemn words of our Lord describing the "awful day, the day of ire";

when "the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty, shall judge the living and the dead."

The following are a few thoughts on the above subjects put together in the form of points for meditation for this month.

November 1st. We have much to learn from the saints, though, as is the case with everything that concerns the interior life, the whole lesson of their lives does not lie on the surface. We have a key to it—and one which unlocks every hidden chamber—in the gospel which the Church puts before us on the feast of All Saints. If we had not these words of our Lord as a guide, we might (as many do) look upon saints as altogether abnormal beings with whom we have nothing in common; whose lives were singled out among the children of men as wonder-workers intended by God for our admiration only, and always, and not for our imitation. Our Lord's words give us not only a truer but the only true view of the case. And He says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are the meek; blessed are they that mourn; blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice; blessed are the merciful; blessed are the clean of heart; blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake. Blessed are ye when they shall revile you and persecute you and speak all that is evil against you untruly for My sake." These words show us in what sanctity consists. True, God may reward the heroic practice of these virtues by the gift of miracles or heights of contemplation; but He bestows such gifts and rewards only where He wills and as He wills. Thus we are never told of the Baptist, the great Precursor, or of St. Joseph, or, in later days, of eminent servants of God such as St. Vincent de Paul, that they worked miracles; all that we know of them is that they attained the greatest heights of sanctity by the practice of virtue and correspondence with the grace which was given to them. Moreover, there is

not one of the rewards which Christ attaches to the Beatitudes, such as the possession of the Kingdom of Heaven, that of obtaining mercy, and the promise that we shall see God, which is not within reach of all who are in a state of grace, and make use of the appointed means of salvation which Christ places at the disposal of all Christians in the sacraments, and sacrifice of the Mass.

November 2nd. On the feast of All Souls we could not do better than contemplate our Lord and Saviour unfolding to His disciples the solemn scroll of their fate, and that of all men when they appear before the judgment seat of God. In the Beatitudes He had put before them the inward dispositions required of them to possess eternal life. In His sermon on the last judgment, Christ declares that these holy dispositions should lead to meritorious actions. How much we have to learn from His words! In the first place we should note the surprise of the good when they are told that in exercising works of mercy they were all the while ministering to the Son of God Himself. Is it not because never, in this life, shall we realize to its full extent that doctrine which is one of the fundamental ones of the Christian religion, that Christ identifies Himself with every one of His flock? And here spiritual writers are struck by the light it throws on the merit of intercessions for the holy souls. For with whom should our divine Saviour identify His interests more closely than with these, His spouses, who have fought the good fight and are only awaiting the crown of victory which by a mysterious dispensation He has made dependent on our prayers. They are hungry, and only we can feed them. They thirst for the vision of God, and He confides to us the duty of giving them to drink by our intercessions for them. By our practices of penance, by the Masses and Communions which we have offered up for them, by our almsdeeds, we can clothe them with the heavenly garment of perfect charity, we can

cure them of their sickness, we can visit them in prison, we can install them in their eternal home.

November 3rd. We read in the gospel of St. Luke that a woman in the crowd who had gathered round Jesus to hear Him Who spoke as no other man spoke, cried in an ecstasy of admiration, "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee and the breasts that gave Thee suck. And He said, Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it."

All Christians hear the Word of God. Few even of those outside the fold have not some acquaintance with the great primary truths of Christianity. For the great Sower has sown His seed over the whole earth, and as the Psalmist prophesied, "there is no one that is hidden from His heat;" but with what different success has this plentiful sowing of good seed been attended! Of how many it could be said that they "receive the word with joy, but having no root in themselves are presently scandalized." Or, that "the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches" have destroyed it and rendered it fruitless. What are we to do so that we may earn our Lord's commendation at our last judgment and be called blessed by Him? Mary gives us the example and points out the way to us. It was said of her after the visit of the shepherds to Bethlehem, "Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart." And again when our Lord spoke those words full of mystery to her and Joseph after they had been seeking Him sorrowing, "Did you not know I must be about my Father's business?" the gospel says, "And his mother kept all these words in her heart." How much we lose by want of "interior silence." The whisperings of the Holy Spirit pass unheeded when the mind is taken up with the "bewitching of trifles," or useless repinings, or, worse still, the greed of money and money-getting. Spiritual writers speak of an "immolation of thoughts" which is unspeakably pleasing to God, and prepares the way in the soul for the highest graces.

November 4th. We are sometimes disturbed by the thought that we have no true love of God. Not only is the love which the saints bore Him utterly beyond us—almost incomprehensible to our feeble intelligence, but we are tempted at times, in moments of spiritual aridity, to ask ourselves whether we even distantly approach to the fulfilment of the First and greatest commandment. Let us ask ourselves in the first place what it is that God asks of all men. Is it not to make an adequate return for the love He bears us? And is this so difficult? Theologians, speaking of the attributes of God, tell us that He is not only patient but that He *is* patience; not only just but justice, and so on with the others; but with only one attribute does God, speaking by the mouth of His apostle, identify Himself, and that is with that of love. "God is love." "I have loved thee with an everlasting love," He says. And again Jesus said, "God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him may not perish but may have life everlasting." Let us dwell on these thoughts till virtue and grace comes out of them, as to those who touched the hem of His garments. St. Francis de Sales tells us of another sure way of acquiring the love of God, and that is by frequently making acts of love. "My God, I love Thee," are words that should be on our lips and in our hearts. Gratitude also leads to the love of God. We should "think of the Lord in goodness," refer to Him all our joys, and cling to Him in all our sorrows, for they also are a proof of His love. And even should we strive with Him to obtain this great gift, as Jacob did with the angel till the dawn, at the end He will turn to us and bless us.

November 5th. We read in the gospel of St. Matthew that on one occasion our Lord was told that His mother and His brethren stood without seeking Him. "And, stretching forth his hands towards His disciples, He said: Behold my mother and my brethren. For whomsoever

shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother." In these words Jesus makes submission to the divine Will the test of love. It is not only the surest test but the only one. It is also an index to our interior life, and more especially of our spirit of recollection—for how should we be able to ascertain God's Will except by our fidelity to this holy practice ? To aim in all our actions to do God's Will in the manner He wills it and because He wills it, is to earn the joyous hope, nay certainty, that He will fulfil His blessed word and greet us, as He does His saints, on our entrance into eternity as His brother and His sister and His mother.

November 6th. We read in the sermon at the Last Supper those beautiful and encouraging words which our divine Saviour spoke to His disciples before parting with them and which He addressed through them to all His followers. " If any one love me, He will keep my word and my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our abode with him." Our Lord in these words was preparing them not only for the greater knowledge which He was about to impart to them with regard to His heavenly Father and the mission of the Holy Ghost, but also for the institution of the Blessed Eucharist. In this, His " unspeakable gift," Christ, besides giving Himself—His Body and Blood, His Humanity and His Divinity—gives also " by concomitance " the Father and the Holy Ghost. Is it astonishing, therefore, that in the belief of the saints, and of the Doctors of the Church, one Communion should be sufficient to make us saints ? That it does not produce in us results at all proportionate to the graces we receive is due to our own unworthiness. If we make an idol of self, the satisfaction of our senses our main object in life, how can we expect to find favour with Him Who says He is a jealous God ? In those words, " I am the way, the truth and the life," He gives Himself as an example to us. The saints have trod on His " Way,"

walking in His footsteps by the practice of self-denial and self-abnegation, and have thus attained to the truth —the only truth, for, as St. Augustine says, " the world in its length and breadth is a lie,"—and so have attained to " life " : a supernatural one in this world, and life eternal with God in the next.

November 7th. In nothing have we to learn more from the example of the saints—following in the footsteps of their divine Model—than in the practice of brotherly love. St. John the Evangelist, to whom our Lord confided all the secrets of His Sacred Heart, besides recording those unforgettable words of his divine Master that it was by the love that they had for one another that men should know them to be His disciples, has told us in his epistle (I. John, ch. iv.) that " charity is of God." " And everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is charity. . . . If we love one another, God abideth in us and His charity is perfected in us. In this we know we abide in Him and He in us because He hath given us of His spirit." Love therefore is the first and last word, the Alpha and Omega of Christ's message to men. Carried to the heroic lengths which we read of in the lives of martyrs of charity, such as Peter Claver or Francis Xavier, it makes saints. But some spark of this divine flame of love of God, and of man for His sake, of which our Lord spoke when He said " I have come to kindle a fire on earth, and what would I but that it should be enkindled ? " must exist, must burn in the heart of man in order that he may be saved. Brotherly love and the love of God are inseparable. " For he that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not ? " And love is synonymous with union. We all know what is meant by a united family. It signifies that each member of it exercises the sovereign virtue of charity in a marked degree. That they have patience with each other's defects (for who is without them ?), do not nurse resentment, wounded feelings and

such manifestations of self-love, but are ready every night to " wash the slate " and begin the next morning with fresh good-will for each other, and with all men, for genuine charity, though it " begins at home," does not end there. And do we not learn from St. John's words that He would have us look on each other as members of one family, for are not all Christians united by the tender bond of one Father in heaven and adopted into a mystical brotherhood with His Son ? St. Francis de Sales points out in some very noteworthy words that the exercise of virtues which we are tempted to despise as mere " domestic virtues " leads to and is typical of the highest sanctity. " Gentleness and yielding to the will of our neighbour is a virtue of great price ; it is the symbol of the prayer of union. For, as that prayer is nothing but the renunciation of ourselves in God, inasmuch as that one who can truly say, I have no longer any will but Thine, O Lord, is entirely united to God ; in like manner the renunciation of our own will to do our neighbour's is true union with our neighbour."

November 8th. On this day the Church celebrates the Octave of the feast of All Saints, recalling to our minds in the Mass the promises made by our Lord and the vision of St. John recorded in the Apocalypse. Before we take leave of this feast, would it not be well that we should raise our hearts on high to contemplate the joys and glories which God has in store for those that love Him. It is right that we should do so as the world, the flesh and the devil are in league to entangle our hearts in material objects, in things that pass away, in order to prevent them from rising to the things that are eternal and will never pass away. The inspired writers are very reticent in what they say about the bliss of heaven ; and this for a most excellent reason. For the happiness which awaits us is altogether spiritual, and so has to be spiritually discerned by the eye of faith resting on the immutable word of God. The chief and transcendant cause of the bliss of the elect is the beatific Vision. In

the *lumen gloriæ*, the light of glory, of which the Doctors of the Church speak in such enraptured terms and which is the fruition of sanctifying grace, we shall see God "as He is" (I. John iii. 2). And in this sight our purified soul will taste of joys of which even the very nature is hidden from us now. In that vision of entrancing beauty and perfect love, every craving of our nature will be satisfied. In this life a mere glimpse is given us of supernatural joys. He Who alone can satisfy our craving for happiness shows Himself but now and then even to His most devoted followers; for He says of Himself that He is a hidden God, *Deus absconditur*. He reserves the full reward to which our faith gives us a title till we see Him face to face. Then will the word of the inspired writer be accomplished, and we shall be "inebriated with the plenty of His House, and made to drink of the torrent of His pleasure." "And the spirit and the bride say Come. And he that heareth let him say come: Surely I come quickly. Come, Lord Jesus."

November 9th. The words used by St. Francis de Sales regarding the feast of the Purification might be also applied to that of All Souls; that it has no octave because the devotion to the holy Souls should continue all through our lives. The clearest indication of God's Will in the matter is that conveyed by the practice of the Church—all the hours of the divine Office, and many other liturgical prayers ending with the petition, "*Fidelium animæ per misericordiam Dei requiescant in pace.*" Or with the equally familiar, "*Requiem æternam dona eis.*" No Mass is celebrated without a special commemoration of the dead, and not only for those mentioned in it, but "for all who sleep in Christ." To examine ourselves, therefore, to see whether we have followed the leading of our Mother the Church in the frequency and perseverance of our prayers for the dead may not be without fruit to our souls. Our first motive should be that we could not do anything more pleasing to God or more in accordance with the divine Will.

To acquire the habit of aiming at pleasing God in our actions is one for which we could not strive too ardently or persistently, and there is no more certain means of attaining to it than by constant and persevering intercession for the holy Souls: for instance, that of making use of short ejaculatory prayers, many of which the Church has highly indulgenced, for the relief of the faithful departed.

November 10th. The question may be asked what grounds have we for being certain that intercession for the holy Souls is so pleasing to God? The answer spiritual writers give, is, because He loves them and longs to see them delivered from their place of suffering and purgation, and to welcome them to their heavenly home and the place which He has prepared for them from all eternity. If He has not done so when they appeared, clothed in sanctifying grace before the Judgment-seat to hear those comforting words, "Come, ye blessed of My Father," it is because His divine justice was not fully satisfied. In this world (we are told) God is all mercy—in the next He is all justice. We have a great lesson to learn on this point from the way our divine Saviour treated His Blessed Mother's petition at the marriage feast at Cana in Galilee when the wine ran short. "What is it to me and to thee?" He answered. "My time has not yet come." And yet rather than refuse her He anticipated it. So it will be with us if we ask the release of the holy Souls with a loving confidence in His goodness, and with a certainty born of faith that we are pleasing Him by so doing.

November 11th. That God longs to be entreated in behalf of sinners in this world and suffering souls in the next, we learn from many passages in Holy Writ. He complains by the mouth of His prophet, "And I sought among them for a man that might set up a hedge, and stand in the gap before me in favour of the land that I might not destroy it, and I found none" (Ezech. xxii., 30). The explanation of this mystery lies in the doctrine

of the Communion of Saints. We are all members of a body of which Christ is the head. And as He, by taking upon Him our sins, expiated them by His death on the Cross, thus vicariously suffering in our stead and so opening the kingdom of heaven to us, so He allows us on account of our close union with Him by divine grace, a great power of impetration when pleading for the souls of our fellow-men, whether in the flesh or of those still detained in the cleansing fire of purgatory. There is but too great a tendency in these days, when comfort both of body and soul is often sought at the expense of unpalatable truths, to minimize the sufferings of the holy Souls. St. Catherine of Bologna's revelations are quoted in support of this view. But if we study them attentively we shall find they are far from doing so. True that she says, " There is no peace to be compared with that of the souls in purgatory save that of the saints in paradise," but she also says, " On the other hand they suffer torments which no tongue can describe nor any intelligence comprehend."

November 12th. There are few who have not some relation or friend near and inexpressibly dear to them who have preceded them to the grave. Let them picture to themselves what their feelings would be if these were recalled to life and they saw them slowly tortured to death in the manner some of the martyrs have suffered for their faith. The cases are not so dissimilar, for we know that God has so consoled and strengthened many of these valiant soldiers of Christ that though their bodies were tormented, their souls appeared to be already in paradise. Yet would it be possible for those who loved the martyrs to witness their tortures unmoved, and not to have stormed Heaven in their behalf that their agonies might be shortened, and that they might sooner receive their reward ? We learn from the teaching of the Church and the revelations of the saints that no tortures, however acute, which the martyrs have endured are to be compared to the pains of the souls in

purgatory, but is our practice at all consistent with such belief? The length of time for which the holy Souls are condemned for sins which in this world would be looked upon as trifling, is another point on which the saints to whom an insight into the world "beyond the veil" was given, have dwelt with unanimous voice. Again, we may ask ourselves, have we not been too ready to lay the flattering unction to our soul that the souls of those we love are "with the just," and so slackened in our efforts to intercede and expiate for them?

November 13th. If on self-examination we find our practice has not come up to our belief in the claim the holy Souls have, whether dear to us or not—knowing that *all* are dear to God—on our prayers and acts of piety, there could not be a better time than this to set to work to reform them. We learn from the teaching of the Church and all ascetical writers that the greatest means of helping them is by offering up and getting Masses offered up for them. In every sacrifice of the Mass Jesus Christ Himself is both High-Priest and Victim, the celebrant officiating only by His power and in His name; and His saints have represented Him as saying, "I am here. What is it that you wish to ask of Me?" There is no moment at which we can plead more successfully for the holy Souls than when we see Him raised up at Mass for our adoration, or after we have received Him in holy Communion. A servant of God, transported at the sight of the sufferings of a soul in purgatory which had been revealed to him, was inspired at the moment when he had received the sacred Host, to cry out to his heavenly Father, "My God, I have Thy Son and Thou hast my friend. I beg of Thee, give me him in exchange," and an interior voice signified to him that his prayer was heard. So should we appeal to the mercy of God—importunately, as the woman of Canaan did when pleading for her daughter, taking no refusal, and He will yield to our prayers.

November 14th. Though the sacrifice of the Mass is the chief means by which we can help the departed and shorten their purgatory, there are innumerable other ones, such as indulgenced prayers, almsgiving and practices of penance. The Way of the Cross wherever the Stations are canonically set up, may be said to take a foremost place under the first heading, the Church having enriched it with all the indulgences which could be gained by a personal visit to the Holy Places. The Rosary said on blessed beads is largely indulgenced ; also the prayer, " Soul of Christ, sanctify me," etc., and the one beginning, " Behold me, O sweet and loving Jesus," both when said after holy Communion. Also the recital three times a day of the Angelus. Many short ejaculatory prayers, such as " My Jesus, mercy ; " " My God, I love Thee," " Mary conceived without sin, pray for us sinners who have recourse to thee," have indulgences of three hundred days attached to them. Besides these and many other indulgences applicable to the holy Souls, there are numerous plenary indulgences such as those attached to the Portiuncula, or to various confraternities : as for instance to being a member of the Congregation of Helpers of the holy Souls, or of the association of the ladies of Charity. Almsgiving with the intention of satisfaction and impetration for the souls in purgatory is another most important means of relieving them. The Scriptures use some very striking words with regard to their power to " deliver from death " (Tob. xii. 9.), to purge away sin (Prov. xv. 29), and St. Paul in writing to the Hebrews (xiii. 16) exhorts them " to do good and to impart, for by such sacrifices God's favour is obtained." As regards practices of penance, we know by the example of the saints and servants of God, especially in the Ages of Faith, that they did not hesitate to inflict pains and penalties on their innocent flesh, in union with those endured by the Son of God, in order to take upon themselves vicariously the punishment due to

the holy Souls and by this means to procure their release.

November 15th. It can hardly be doubted that a complete indifference to the claims of the suffering members of Christ's body on our prayers is to neglect a powerful means of pleasing Him and bringing down His blessings on us. To pray and work and suffer for them (to use the motto of the Helpers of the holy Souls), is to be of the same mind as the Church, *Sentire cum ecclesia*, and as such to fulfil one of the duties which we owe her as faithful children. But there are degrees in the fervour and intensity in which we may take up this devotion, for the holy Spirit does not speak to two souls alike. There are some to whom the conversion of sinners makes an overwhelming appeal. To others there are no objects which compare in their opinion in pressing importance to that of souls in their agony; many are strongly drawn to prayer for the evangelization of the heathen. All are good, and very good, and come from God. To those whose paramount attraction is devotion to the holy Souls, the Church has authorized and encouraged what is called the "Heroic act," by which of their free will and after mature deliberation (for so serious an undertaking should not be entered into lightly) to make over all their satisfactions and indulgences, even the Masses and prayers offered up for them after their death, for the benefit of the souls in purgatory. To do this is to go even further than the commandment asks of us that we should love our neighbour as ourself. But it is, on the other hand, the most perfect response we can make to the "new commandment" which our Lord gave to His disciples at the Last Supper: "that you love one another as I have loved you, that you also love one another." Is not this the way He loved us—stripping Himself of all things for our sakes, taking upon Himself the burden of our sins, and so dying, naked, deserted, on the Cross? If, therefore, we despoil ourselves in

union with Him and for His sake for the sake of His suffering brethren in Purgatory, it is not to be believed that He will let us outdo Him in generosity, and even should such a sacrifice prolong our purgatory, He will reward us for it with an added degree of bliss and glory for all eternity.

November 16th. Mary is the Queen of Purgatory; accordingly the greater use we make of her patronage and favour in our dealings with the nether world of which we know so little, the greater will be the benefit to the holy Souls and our own. It is with this belief that many (whether they have made the "Heroic act" or not) make it a practice each morning to put all the indulgences they may gain during the day at the disposal of the Blessed Mother, imploring her to distribute them as she knows best for the good of the holy Souls and the greater honour and glory of God. If we belong to the confraternity of the blue Scapular we could not do better than to offer up daily six Our Fathers, Hail Marys, and Glory be to the Fathers, for the intentions of our holy Father the Pope in order to gain indulgences. We are recommended to make this prayer in honour of the Blessed Trinity, the Immaculate Conception of the B.V. Mary, for the conversion of sinners and for the souls in purgatory.

November 17th. We may be tempted, after hearing all that we can do, or are recommended to do, for the holy Souls, to ask ourselves the question: What benefit will my soul derive from these devotions? In the first place (as we have been told) we shall please God by them. Do we, shall we ever in this life, realize the full meaning of these words which we often pronounce so lightly? If we did so, even for one passing moment, in the full light of eternity, every other ambition or aspiration except this one would fade away as the light of a glow-worm fades before the rising of a tropical sun. To please Him in Whose hands are the ends of the earth, the All-loving, the All-powerful, before

Whose judgment-seat we shall one day appear to receive our sentence of endless joy or endless woe: and we can hesitate! But this is not the only reason. By praying, working, and suffering for the holy Souls, we shall procure their powerful advocacy with God. The consensus of opinion in the Church is that though they cannot help themselves by their prayers whilst they are detained in the expiatory flames of their prison-house, their intercession for their benefactors on earth is favourably heard by the Almighty. St. Catherine of Genoa was accustomed to say that she had obtained graces through their intercession which she had failed in obtaining through that of the saints.

November 18th. Another important result of cultivating a devotion to the holy Souls is that it will throw light on our own shortcomings and infidelity to grace. For the truth will continually force itself upon us—when offering our intercessions for those with whom we have lived in intimacy on earth, or for the souls known to God alone who are a prey to the purgatorial flames—that it is for such causes and for the insufficiency of the penance they have done whilst in life for sin that they are detained in purgatory. The opinion held by many theologians is that at the moment after death the soul who has died in a state of grace is shown all the sins she has committed during life so that she may make an efficacious act of contrition for them. After that the page of her life is, as it were, closed, and she is no longer tormented with the recollection of them. Can we bear to think of what that moment will be to us if we have lived a careless life, deaf very often to the whispers of the Holy Spirit, in which God and mammon were ever striving for supremacy and the latter constantly getting the upper hand?

"Who shall understand sin?" the prophet-king exclaims, "and from those of others spare thy servant." Never in this life shall we understand the heinousness of sin in the sight of the all-pure and all-perfect God,

or the many occasions in which our sins of commission or omission, our pride, our humours, our bad example have been the cause of sin in others. From two great objects only can we gain some knowledge on a subject of such moment to us: one is the Crucifix, from which we learn at what cost the Son of God purchased our redemption; and the other the penal fires of purgatory, where we behold by the eye of faith the punishment of a Just Judge for sin.

November 19th. A great horror and fear of sin is one of the greatest graces that can be given us; for it is sin, more than anything else, that prevents our having God for our Friend, as we learn from the words of Scripture, "He that loveth cleanness of heart shall have the King for his friend" (Prov. xxii. 2). And again in those equally striking ones, "Your iniquities have made a division between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you that he should not hear" (Is. lix. 13). To be habitually in the frame of mind when we dread sin as the one great evil in life; to fly from the occasions of it; and to grieve deeply even for the slightest infractions of the divine laws: such for instance as the command of loving our neighbour as ourself, is to pave the way to a peaceful deathbed and a short purgatory.

November 20th. There is yet one more personal motive which should move us to take up this devotion and to encourage it in others; and that is the effect on our own lives of working for an end visible only to the eye of faith. The effect will be to supernaturalize them as nothing else could do. Human motives, sometimes purely selfish ones, too often find entrance in good works—even performed by good people—but in work and prayer for the holy Souls there can be none. They are a secret between God and our own soul. Our Lord in a communication He made to a holy nun of the Visitation Order, Sister Benigna Consolata, compared her soul to a chalice dedicated to the divine

service in which only wine was poured. And as (He told her) the wine by the words of consecration is changed into the precious Blood, so were her actions, when performed with a pure intention, transformed into supernatural acts perfectly pleasing to Him.

November 21st. The work of supernaturalizing our lives : in other words of causing us to substitute a supernatural motive, that of pleasing God and contributing to His honour and glory, for the human one, which is instinctive and therefore a more or less selfish one, lies at the very root of the spiritual life. It will more than anything else make our lives a perpetual service of God, and so earn for us those consoling words foretold by Christ Himself to all who serve Him faithfully, " Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord." " Spiritual works unspiritually done," we learn from a master in the interior life, is one of the causes which keep people back, and delay their progress in perfection. What is it to perform our spiritual actions unspiritually but to be wanting in purity of intention : doing them hurriedly, in a slovenly manner, in the way a careless servant acts when his master's back is turned, not with that filial reverence which should mark all that we do for God and in His service. St. Paul says of our divine Saviour that " He was heard for His reverence," and these words applied to the petitions addressed by the Son of God to His Eternal Father, point out to us in an unmistakable manner what we should do in order to be heard, while showing us the cause of our failure.

November 22nd. The state of many souls when they are brought by sudden illness face to face with death is not unlike that of a man threatened with bankruptcy who has never kept accounts. He knows his money has gone, but about all else he is in complete ignorance. He does not know what bills are paid and which are still owing. It is too late now to keep accounts with the creditors at the door. Accordingly he gives himself

up to despair. To apply this to the moral order, death comes under its worst guise when we have neglected to make use of what spiritual writers have called the "rudder" of the interior life, a daily and systematic examination of conscience. The evil spirit, ever on the watch to ensnare our soul, will make a last desperate effort to cause us to fall into the sin for which there is no repentance: despair of God's mercy. Up to the last moment he had represented to us that our sins were trifling—that God would never condemn us to eternal perdition for such slight infringements of His laws. But now he changes his tactics and, so we are told, magnifies them, and represents God as a severe judge who will expect payment to the last farthing. There is only one means of insuring peace to our souls at that dread moment. It is that we turn to God after every sin we commit—and we know that the just man falls seven times a day—even were it only by a passing glance of the soul, deplore our weakness and ask Him to forgive us; then will it happen to us as to the ten lepers who "on their way were made clean," for though the priest ratifies God's forgiveness after a humble confession, it has already been gained by an act of loving sorrow for sin.

November 23rd. Another source of consolation to us at that solemn moment so dreaded by man is if we have, as our Lord bade us do, made friends and advocates of the mammon of iniquity. On the other hand what anguish will be ours if we recall to mind how we have used the riches—little or great—which Providence has put at our disposal for the gratification of our senses, for display, and for the pomps and vanities which we were bound by our baptismal vows to renounce: for though made for us they were binding on us as soon as we came to the use of reason. Our influence too, has it been used in God's favour, for His behalf, or have we neglected this great means of doing good which, in a trifling or important degree, He has put into the hands

of all, and by which we could have contributed so largely to His honour and glory ? And the pleasures of life ? Have we been satisfied with the innocent ones—receiving them gratefully from His hands and giving thanks for them, or have they been a source of sin to us, and of disedification to His little ones ?

Without doubt fear must precede and accompany all our dealings with the Almighty, for we are told it is the beginning of wisdom ; but we should ever bear in mind that it is filial fear of which the Wise Man speaks, not the fear of slaves. Mother Juliana, the anchoress of Norwich, has some very beautiful thoughts on these two kinds of fears—or, as she calls them, " dreads." Speaking of want of confidence in God, she says, " For some of us believe that God is almighty and may do all, and that He is all wisdom and can do all ; but that He is all love, and will do all, there we fail. . . . Doubtful dread inasmuch as it draweth to despair, God will have turned in us into love by true knowledge of love ; that is to say that the bitterness of doubts be turned into sweetness by grace ; for it may never please our Lord that His servants doubt of His goodness." Then she describes the dread that is pleasing to God : " It is that which maketh us hastily to flee from all that is not good and fall on to our Lord's breast, as the child into the mother's arm, with all our intent and with all our mind, knowing our feebleness and our great need, knowing His everlasting goodness and His blessed love, only seeking into Him for salvation, cleaving to Him with faithful trust ; the dread that bringeth us to this working, it is kind and gracious and good."*

November 24th. We are too apt to think of death as the end of all things, instead of as the beginning of a life so glorious that even if we had but a momentary glance of it we should be consumed with such a longing

* " Revelations of Mother Juliana of Norwich " (ch. lxxiii.).

for it that this life ever afterwards would appear to us in the light of an intolerable weariness and burden. And this is not only *one* view of death, but the only true one, and should be that of all who put faith in Christ's promises. The reason why the thought of death is a terror—a bugbear—to so many (such as it was to all, including the Jews, before the coming of our Lord) is that their faith is not sufficiently strong to conquer an instinct which every child of Adam inherits as one of the punishments of his fall.

To the believer, death should appear but "as a covered bridge, leading from light to light through a brief darkness." A darkness lit up by sacraments especially adapted to the wants of the dying; to sacramentals, such as holy water, the Agnus Dei, the crucifix—all testifying and recalling to the memory the redemption of man through the death of Christ, and conveying grace to his soul. Death which was erstwhile a defeat, the defeat of man at the hand of his arch-enemy Satan, is now a victory. For, as St. Paul tells us: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? . . . But thanks be to God who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I. Cor. xv. 56-7).

November 25th. St. Francis de Sales, to whom the Holy Spirit imparted so many hidden sources of sweetness and consolation, wrote as follows about death: "Jesus wished to unite the sacrifice of His divine life, one infinitely more precious than the lives of all men and angels, with the sacrifice each one of us should make to God of our miserable and unworthy life; thus to render our death, by uniting it with His, capable of meriting for us an eternal life. To die without sharing in these dispositions of Jesus Christ at His death, is to die not as a Christian but as a beast dies, out of necessity, or as a reprobate dies, deprived of the grace of God. We should ask for them at the time of the holy Sacrifice, and at Communion when Jesus Christ offers Himself

again to His Father in these same dispositions and comes to us to communicate them to us. . . . One of the chief effects of the Incarnation and death of our Saviour has been to deliver us from the fear of death. He became man and put on our mortality that He might destroy him by His death who was the prince of death—that is to say Satan ; and that He might deliver those whom the fear of death had held till then in continual servitude during life. Is it not in a sense, therefore, to dishonour the victory of Jesus Christ over death, to tremble before an enemy whom He has vanquished and thus to remain in slavery through fear of dying ? "

November 26th. " Jesus Christ " (he continues) " ardently desired the arrival of the hour that would consummate His sacrifice by the shedding of His blood. ' I have a baptism,' He said, ' wherewith I am baptized, and how I am straightened until it be accomplished ! ' Should not a Christian, a member of His Body, enter into these sentiments and share His spirit ? For death ought to appear to a true Christian as a baptism in which he will be washed from all his sins and regenerated to an immortal life perfectly exempt from the corruption of sin. We should then desire with ardour the moment when, like our divine Head, we make this sacrifice. It should be made in the first place in order to give the greatest honour and glory to the sovereign majesty of God that any creature is capable of giving Him, and the most perfect homage to the death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Secondly, to offer to God a great act of thanksgiving in proof of gratitude to Him for having sacrificed the life of His well-beloved Son for us on the Cross, for the immolation of the body and blood of Jesus Christ for our sakes on the altar, and for having given us His Holy Spirit and the life of grace. Thirdly, to offer to God the fullest satisfaction that we are able to make to Him for our sins by offering Him our death in union with that of Jesus Christ ; and lastly, to draw down upon ourselves God's mercy by a humble

acceptance of death, and by the continual offering and sacrifice we make to Him of our life."

November 27th. The Doctors and Fathers of the Church are unanimous in saying that there is no offering that we can make to God which is more pleasing to Him than the voluntary acceptance of death. They even compare it to the sacrifice the martyr makes of his life in defence of his faith. St. Jerome asks, " Why should we not imitate the martyrs in something ? Are we not, like them, the disciples of a God crucified for our salvation, and are we not, like them, destined to the kingdom of Heaven ? It is true that, unlike them, we have not the happiness of shedding our blood for Him, but why should we not endeavour to supply the place of this by the continual oblation that we can make to Him of the kind of death which He destines for us ? " " For," he goes on to say, "there is as much merit, and perhaps more, in offering to Him our life during the successive moments in which He preserves it to us as by losing it once by the cruelty of the executioner." And St. Augustine says, " If the angels could envy any privilege in man, it would be his ability to die for the love of God."

November 28th. Addressing those who are confronted with death after having led worldly lives, St. Francis de Sales says they are filled with remorse. " ' Oh,' they exclaim, ' if I had fasted ! If I had performed great acts of charity for the poor ! Alas ! I am no longer in a state to do so. What will become of me ? What shall I do ? ' You can do something greater than anything you have mentioned : namely, accept death, and unite it with that of Jesus Christ. No mortification can be compared to this ; it is the profoundest humiliation, the most complete denudation of all things, the greatest act of penance ; and I do not hesitate to say that he who is grieved for having offended God and who accepts of death willingly in satisfaction of his sins, will immediately obtain pardon. What a consolation to believe that we can perform while dying, a greater

penance than all the anchorets have been able to perform in the desert, and this at a time when it would seem that we had no longer the power to do anything. The preparations that we might wish to bring with us to this our last sacrifice ought not, when the hour of consummating it arrives, to lead us to desire that the sacrifice should be deferred. Preparations are less necessary than submission to the Will of God. Our submission can supply the place of these preparations, but nothing can supply the want of our submission. The essential part is to go to meet Him with confidence and love, and we should think only of exciting acts of these virtues."

November 29th. The distinction which St. Augustine traces between the perfect and the imperfect is that the perfect suffer life with pain and welcome death with joy, while the imperfect receive death with patience, only, struggling against themselves to submit to the will of God—yielding notwithstanding to what He requires of them and arming themselves with courage to overcome the desire of life and to receive death with peace and submission. " Happy are we," says St. John Chrysostom, " if we sigh and groan continually within ourselves, awaiting the accomplishment of our divine adoption which will be the redemption and deliverance of our bodies and souls ; if we desire to depart from this world with as much ardour and impatience as the banished look forward to an end to their exile, and captives to that of their imprisonment."

November 30th. If we ask with St. Paul, " to whom will the Lord, as a just judge, render the crown of justice on the great day," he supplies likewise the answer, it will be " to those who love His coming." And St. Francis de Sales, after quoting these words, goes on to say, " Jesus Christ, after having given a description of the dreadful signs which will precede His coming, after having told us that men will wither away from fear in expectation of the evils with which the wicked

world will be threatened, addresses Himself then to His disciples who were present—and to all who should come after them—in these words of joy and consolation: 'As for you, when these things begin to happen, look up, lift your heads, for your redemption is at hand.' And again, 'When you shall see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is nigh.'"

The epistle of the Twenty-fourth (or last) Sunday after Pentecost is taken from St. Paul's to the Colossians (ch. i.). Every word of this sublime passage from the great apostle's writings is sufficient to furnish us with food for deep and earnest reflection. In the first place he prays that his brethren "may be filled with the knowledge of the will of God." Is not this the "wisdom and spiritual understanding" that we all stand in need of? For to be filled with this all-important knowledge is a very different thing from having a passing glimpse of it whilst we are making our examen of conscience, or a hurried quarter of an hour's meditation: for a cup to be filled means that it can contain nothing more. In like manner the divine Will should govern and master our lives to the exclusion of purely natural and self-interested motives. He goes on to say:

> "That you may walk worthy of God, in all things pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might according to the power of his glory, in all patience and long-suffering with joy; giving thanks to God the Father who hath made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the saints in light."

How much does the word "walk" stand for in this context! Does it not signify that we shall no longer wander, drifting hither and thither according as the current of our inclination or passions leads us; but, led by the knowledge of God's Will, as the Magi were

led by a star to Bethlehem, advance steadily in the path of perfection till we become partakers of the lot of the saints.

In the gospel, which is taken from that of St. Matthew (ch. xxiv.), our Lord, by a series of striking images, represents to His disciples the awful punishments that were in store for the people of Israel who rejected Him. He then describes the Last Day, the day of retribution and of Judgment when they shall see Him, " the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty."

Thus does the Church, after leading the Christian soul during the time after Pentecost upward and onward towards the goal of perfect union with her divine Head, fall back, as it were, on the consideration of the primary truths of death, judgment, hell and heaven for the instruction of men. She can never forget Christ's words, " Other sheep I have who are not of this fold." To those, as well as to the wanderers from her own, and equally to her children, she speaks these words of counsel and warning. And there is not one amongst us who would not do well to take them to heart. For as long as we are in life, we can never be sure of what our end will be. Final perseverance is a grace we cannot merit, though we may trust implicitly in God's mercy to give it to us and to all who ask it of Him with humble and contrite hearts. The example as well as the recommendations of the saints all go to prove that however high the soul may soar in prayer, it must ever return to the consideration of its vileness and misery. We read in the Life of St. Francis of Borgia that his preparation for prayer was to make an hour's meditation on his sins and infidelities to grace; and St. Francis of Assisi's one prayer, which his nights were spent in repeating, was, " Who art Thou, my God, and who am I ? Thou art the Lord God of Heaven and earth, and I am a base worm." St. Benedict, though he enters into few details as to the form of prayer that he wished

his disciples to make, gives this striking recommendation, "If anyone wishes to pray, let him simply go into the oratory and pray: not in much speaking but in purity of heart, and compunction of tears, and in intentness of heart." We read also in the revelations of St. Gertrude that our Lord told her that the soul should resemble the eagle, which after soaring high in the air into the eye of the sun, descends to its lowly nest in the rocks.

But not for the profit of our own soul, only, should we enter into the spirit and mind of the Church at this period of the year when, abandoning the joys and glories of Pentecost, she turns to the penitential time of Advent. The more we cling to her—the Spouse of Christ, the Mother of our soul—the more closely we tread in her footsteps, the more will she imbue us with her spirit of love, reparation and intercession for all men whether toiling, militant on earth, or suffering in the cleansing fires of purgatory. Nor does the sphere of her influence end there, or of ours in union with hers. The spirit of God who is within her, guides her to all truth, for it is given to her "to have knowledge of the voice." Never should we forget that whilst she is labouring on earth she is also reigning triumphant, the bride of the Lamb, in Heaven. The glorious choir of apostles, the white-robed army of martyrs, the confessors and virgins who have fought under her banner, have begun the eternal Amen and Alleluia, which is the canticle of the redeemed. Nor is this all, or rather, so far, all that has been said is as nothing, for no creature, not even the ever-blessed Mother of God, can give the Creator a worship worthy of Himself. But what is lacking to His Church Christ himself supplies. For it was said of Him, the divine Head, that He was "a High Priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedek." For, "by one oblation" (as St. Paul says), "He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (He. x. 14.). *"There on the altar it is that the Church, by

* "Spiritual Life and Prayer," p. 400 (C. Bruyére).

the divine Lamb, offers to God a sacrifice worthy of Him, and there it is that participating in the Flesh of that living and immolated Lamb, she is in her turn transformed into Him and offered as the mystic Body of her divine Head, as His fullness and completion. The Holy Spirit, the principle of unity and the link uniting the members with their Head, brings about this marvellous association which is the Communion of Saints. He it is that makes the unity of the Priesthood, the unity of the Altar, the unity of the Victim, the unity of the Sacrifice consummated in heaven and on earth by His devouring fire. . . . He is not only the fire of the altar, a fire which consummates and consumes the holocaust, but also the live coal (Isa. vi. 6) which purifies the lips of those destined to sing the divine praises; the live coal taken off the altar of heaven and placed in the human heart as in a censer, that the prayers of the saints may ascend to the throne of God. . . . That which the Divine Spirit accomplishes in perfect unity in heaven and on earth, that in like manner He reproduces in every human soul. In each of us the labours of the whole spiritual life tend only to this end, 'For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God.' Man is in very truth a temple wherein there is offered a liturgical oblation after the model of the worship rendered to God by the Church, and this, thanks to the Holy Spirit Who takes up His abode within Him."

What can be said in conclusion except that, faithful to the teachings of the Church founded by Christ, we may rest secure until we all "meet into the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Eph. iv. 13).

APPENDIX

League of Intercession for Priests

With the sanction of His Eminence Cardinal Bourne, a "League of Intercession for Priests" has been formed, with the object of praying for (1) an increase in the number *and sanctity* of vocations, (2) a great out-pouring of the Holy Spirit upon all Priests, and (3) for the souls of Priests in Purgatory. All members of the League are asked to say daily the short prayer of the League, and to offer their Communion on the Feast of the Sacred Heart every year for the above intentions of the League. And since His Priests are more precious than any of His children to the Heart of our Divine Lord, the special object of the League is to establish a series of Masses, in perpetuity, upon the Feast of the Sacred Heart, right round the world, so placed that one Mass will begin before another ends for the whole twenty-four hours.

Prayer

O GOD, who didst love Thine only begotten Son from all eternity,[1] and didst will Him[2] to become at once the Great High Priest[3] and the Saving Victim[4] for the sins of the whole world,[5] pour forth Thy Holy Spirit, we beseech Thee, upon Thy servants, the Priests of His Holy Church,[6] and grant that in these days of tribulation[7] there may be a great increase in the

number and sanctity of vocations[8] to the holy office of the Priesthood, and a growing fervour on the part of all those who offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and minister to the care of souls.[9]

O JESUS, our Great High Priest, may all the love and help and merciful compassion of Thy Sacred Heart be with Thy Priests in their life and work, especially in the sacred ministry of the Altar. Graciously accept our prayers and communions in union therewith, and grant to Thy Priests who have departed this life, everlasting rest and the reward of their labours for the salvation of souls.[10]

Grant these our prayers, O Father, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST[11] Thy Son, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity if the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

O JESUS, Eternal Priest! keep these Thy servants within the shelter of Thy Sacred Heart.

[1] St. John xvii. 24. [2] Psalm xxxix. 8, 9.
[3] Psalm cix. 4. Hebrews v. 5, 6, 10.
[4] Sophonius i. 7. Hebrews ii. 17.
[5] I. St. John ii. 2. [6] Joel ii. 29. Jeremias xxxi 14.
[7] St. Matt. xxiv. 21. Daniel xii. 1.
[8] Joel ii. 32. Daniel xii. 10.
[9] Psalm ciii. 4. Hebrews i. 7.
[10] Isaias xxv. 8, 9. Psalm xxxix. 1, 2. Apocalypse xiv. 13.
[11] St.John xvi. 23.

The headquarters of the League is at the Convent of Marie Réparatrice, Tower House, Chiswick Lane, London, W.4.

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